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TWOPENCE



POINTS OF VIEW

Before the Statue of Oliver Cromwell outside the House of Commons.

ARTHUR HENDERSON: A great man! Notice the Bible?

LEON TROTSKY: True, a very great man! Notice the Sword?

PAGES FROM THE HISTORY OF REVOLUTION IN ENGLAND

Magna Charta

By J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD

WITH no argument are Communists more familiar than the oft repeated criticism that their advocacy of the imperative necessity of revolution is alien to the genius of the English people and to the traditions of the English nation.

Yet the whole system of the Constitution bears upon it the impress of a series of revolutions and civil wars. There is not one important aspect of it from the Crown to the Cabinet and including both Houses of Parliament, the Privy Council, the Established Church, the Services and the great Departments of State which has not, at one time or another, been fashioned or re-fashioned in the fiery crucibles of armed class conflict.

It is impossible to enter the precincts of Parliament without being reminded of the means whereby a sterner race of class leaders asserted the principle of "No taxation without representation," i.e., of "no contributions without control." There, in front of Westminster Hall and again at the foot of the stairs leading to the main committee rooms, are placed, respectively, a bronze statue and a marble bust of the man who sent a King to his just deserts, who shut up the House of Commons and who established a military dictatorship. The bourgeois themselves have set up Oliver Cromwell as an enduring reproach to the fantastic romance which the Right Honourables of the Labour Party would palm off as the last word of political intelligence.

There, in Westminster Hall, the barons of England compelled the Regent Edward in 1297 to confirm the Charters and his royal father to respect the signed agreement.

"The proceedings," says Bishop Stubbs, "were tumultuary; the earls attended with an armed force and insisted that the regent should accept and enact certain supplementary articles based on the list of grievances. The Prince, by the advice of his councillors granted all that was asked."—*Constitutional History of England*, vol. II., p. 145.

Across the roadway, rises the glorious mediæval pile, the stately Gothic fane of the Abbey of St. Peters at Westminster, the building of which by Henry III. imposed such a burden of taxation upon the wool trade and upon the landlords of the 13th century as to provoke the Baron's War. There, in the Chapter House, prior to the Reformation, used to deliberate the House of Commons and there it put through the revolutionary legislation to endorse the deposition of Edward II., Richard II., and the elevation of Henry VII. to a throne to which he had no legal claim.

"I cannot," says Maitland, "regard the events of 1327, 1399 or 1688 as legal precedents. I can deduce no rule of law from them; they seem to me precedents for a revolution, not for legal action."—*Constitutional History of England*. (Revised and edited by H. A. L. Fisher, 1908. Reprinted Cambridge University Press, 1919.), p. 344.

In Whitehall stands the old Banqueting Hall, outside of which on the morning of January 29th, 1649, close guarded by the soldiers of the New Model Army, a "martyr" monarch lost his head upon the scaffold.

Let us, briefly, survey some of these episodes. Let us see what effect they had upon the moulding of this country's institutions. Let us observe how far the chief actors therein conformed to "the fundamental principle" upon which the Labour Party lays so emphatic a stress.

First of all, we come upon the Great Charter of 1215, wrested from King John by his barons not within "the law of the country for the time being," but, clad in

chain mail and arms in hand in the great assembly of the magnates on the banks of the Thames at Runnymede.

It was the Great Charter which, according to Professor Pollard in his *Evolution of Parliament*, endowed the House of Lords with its most important privileges, giving it the power of veto and setting it up as the supreme court of law.

This Charter, as one recent authority says, "manifestly conceived in the interests of a class" and "drawn up for the baronage and not for the nation as a whole," was aimed, according to Professor Pollard, at securing certain liberties.

What were those liberties? "They were largely composed of the services of their vassals." The barons were seeking to restrain the King from interfering with their rights of property. "Liberty," the same historian tells us, "was an adjunct, almost a form of property." "Liberty has been defined as a portion of sovereign authority in the hands of a subject, and the popularity of liberty entirely depends upon the extent of their portions and their distribution." "To re-distribute and equalise liberty has been one of the functions of Parliament."

The barons made a beginning in 1214 and 1215 with this re-distribution. They went on with it in 1265 and 1297. No one can gainsay the fact that what they were concerned about was "an adjunct of property" and "a form of property," i.e., with taxes upon land and its yield in wool and with the tenure of the land itself. They were concerned to keep a grip upon the labour services (i.e., rent) of their serfs. They objected to the King—or his over-lord, the Church—relieving them of any larger share of that "increased production" which improvements in agriculture and sheep rearing were making possible. They tried to put a stop to this exercise by the King of a prerogative which they contended he was stretching.

The struggle that commenced with John ended with the Wars of the Roses. It was one long class conflict, one long war for "liberty."

How did the barons conduct their campaign?

Bishop Stubbs writes:—

"They had met on the pretence of pilgrimage at St. Edmunds, and had there sworn that if the King delayed any longer to restore the laws and liberties, they would withdraw their allegiance and make war upon him until he should confirm the concession by a sealed charter . . . they collected an army at Stamford . . . as soon as they knew that their demands were rejected they proceeded to London . . . nearly all the members of his court and household obeyed the summons addressed to them by the confederacy . . . under these circumstances he set his seal to the articles proposed by the barons."—*Constitutional History of England*, Vol. I., p. 569.

When John failed to keep his promise, the barons had no hesitation as to what they should do. They, again, took up arms and, not content with that, sought and obtained foreign assistance. The barons believed in direct action and were apter at wielding their battle-axes than their tongues. But then they were class-conscious and that makes a mighty big difference in the way people behave themselves.

In 1258, the barons resumed the struggle of 1215, endeavouring not only to check the centralisation of sovereign power in the hands of the King and his officers but to limit the right of their sub-tenants to transfer land to the detriment of the property and class interests of their feudal superiors. They were determined to stop the King's interference with what they held was their "liberty" to plunder others to their hearts' content and within their own domain. How did they comport them-

selves? Stubbs—never forget that Stubbs was Bishop of Oxford and eminently respectable—writes:—

"On the 11th June, at Oxford, the Mad Parliament, as it was called by Henry's partisans, assembled. It seems to have been a full assembly of the baronage and higher clergy. Fearful of treachery . . . the barons had availed themselves of the summons to the Welsh war, and appeared in full military array."—*Constitutional History of England*, vol. II., p. 76.

The next year, the lesser landlords, the Knights of the Shires, demanded that four of their number should be conceded the right in each county to check the power of the sheriff. This, the class-conscious magnates refused to entertain, and, for some time, there was a quarrel in the camp of the revolutionaries. In 1262, the Pope released the King from the oath to observe the Provisions of Oxford. He refused to renew the bargain and the question was "referred to arbitration." The arbitrator, Lewis IX. of France, being King-conscious, i.e., having the craft outlook, upheld the King's prerogative and decided on all points against the barons, merely reserving to them the ancient liberties embodied in the Charters. On these there was no agreement. The King read into them one meaning, the barons another. "But every political party falsifies history in its appeal to precedent." At least, so says Professor Pollard. It is only the leaders of the Labour Party, however, who have learned from their "betters" to falsify it in the interests of their "betters." The barons falsified it in their own interests.

Led by Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, the barons treated the award with contempt and set the King at defiance. "On the 14th (May, 1264) the battle of Lewes . . . placed the King with his supporters as prisoners at the mercy of the earl."

The King was compelled to summon a Parliament. Simon saw to its selection. "The great feature of the Parliament," says Stubbs, "was the representation of the shires, cities, and boroughs." Pollard contends that Simon did not create the House of Commons but that what he "did was to systematise, and perhaps turn to political and party purposes, a habit of representation that had long obtained in the redress of grievances." Be that as it may, the fact remains that the House of Commons—or rather those knights and burgesses who, subsequently, were to sit apart as the Commons—emerges in 1265.

Simon's Parliament represented the whole of the class of landed proprietors—large and small. If anything, its bias was to the Left. The manner of its selection we will leave Stubbs to tell:—

"It was not a general convention of the tenants-in-chief, or of the three estates, but a parliamentary assembly of the supporters of the existing government. THIS WAS A MATTER OF NECESSITY."—*Constitutional History of England*, vol. II., p. 96.

But how at variance with "the fundamental principle" of Mr. Macdonald and Mr. Thomas was the procedure of Simon and his colleagues. Why, they set at defiance "the law of the land for the time being." They refused to accept the arbitrator's award. They took up arms. They suppressed the minority.

What "flabbiness of intelligence and confusion of morality" in Bishop Stubbs to palliate their conduct because, forsooth, it was "a matter of necessity." Neither Simon de Montfort nor Bishop Stubbs would have been able, we fear, to answer the Labour Party's Questionnaire with credit to themselves or to the satisfaction of the Executive.

The Peasants' Revolt, 1381

By ALEXANDER JOHN

WHEN the feudal system of society was in a state of decomposition (at a much slower pace than is the case with capitalism) the exploited classes led one attack after the other against the antiquated order of society which made their lives unbearable. They had to fight a parasitic class, as tyrannic, as cruel, and as cunning, as the capitalist of our own days. But nothing could break their revolutionary determination.

The peasant revolution is the outstanding event of this long struggle. And in the lightning-light of this dramatic outburst, we may see distinctly the whole structure of mediæval society.

The Economic Situation in 1381

What was the cause of the revolution? What caused its sudden breakdown? Did it effect the emancipation of the villeins? Or did it worsen their servitude? Who profited by the revolution?

The whole economic system was in a state of dissolution. The manorial system, relying partly on serf-labour and partly on hired labour, corresponded no longer to the needs of the population. It had passed through an important change earlier in the century, when the customary services on the land of the landlord were commuted into annual money-payments and hired labour was introduced for the cultivation of the demesne. This worked fairly well when labour was plentiful, but was unprofitable in a time of labour scarcity. After the Black Death (1348-9) the landlords tried to return to the old system of customary services. At the same time those serfs whose customary services had not been commuted into money payments tried to get rid of these much hated services. An enormous number of peasants were leaving the manors to find some less exacting employment. No punishment, no persecution, could stop this migration. The landlords became more and more dependent on hired labour and with this again their difficulties grew. The proclamation of 1349, the Statute of Labourers of 1351 and the subsequent orders and regulations fixing a ridiculously low maximum wage at a time of great scarcity of labour could strike heavily at individual workmen, but could not secure a prosperous agricultural production. In spite of all the efforts of the landlords, in spite of all the Statutes, serf-labour was doomed. And place must be made for a new economic system if England were not to fall into an age-long anarchy.

The wealth of the merchants had steadily increased, and so also the political influence of the rich merchants. A small clique of the richest merchant families directed the affairs of almost every town, and being often the creditors of the King, were able to make the monarch further their interests by issuing decrees to their liking.

The Class Relations

In mediæval society, class relations were much more complicated than in the existing one. We may divide them roughly into the exploiting classes (consisting of the King, nobles, clergy, merchants and masters), and the exploited class (consisting of the peasants, hired agricultural labourers, village artisans, apprentices and unskilled town labourers, mostly of rural origin).

Regarded from the view-point of their political interests they fall into three groups.

The first consists of those who are absolutely antagonistic to any revolutionary action, because under the given conditions they can only lose with the success of the revolution. These are the King, the nobles, the clergy and the rich merchants who are the oligarchical rulers of the towns (they fight each other also, but in a time of revolutionary danger they unite against the rebels).

The second group consists of those who having nothing can only win if the revolution succeeds. These are the peasants and the labourers. They are the only real revolutionary force and they having all a peasant ideology, the whole revolution bears an essentially peasant stamp. The

town workers merely assist the peasants or with the poorer masters form a rival party against the merchant oligarchs of the towns. They did not, and at that time could not, appear as an independent, conscious class.

Between these two groups there is a third one—the people who use the revolution for the amelioration of their position, but who are not fighting for real revolutionary changes. These are the groups of masters (often guilds) excluded from local administration, the lower clergy, and a part of the lower nobility. The first-named only play an important part. Bourgeois historians who do not see the clear class issues, often confound their part with that of the real revolutionary group.

They are also much confused about the role of individuals coming over from the ruling classes into the revolutionary camp. Some of these are only seeking a career; others are the most self-sacrificing militants of the revolution. Having entered this camp they lose their previous status and become members of the revolutionary class. But this simple truth is unintelligible to Charles Oman, who is amazed seeing the relation of (Sir) Roger Bacon to Geoffrey Lister. "How it came to pass," he states, "that the dyer commanded and the gentleman obeyed we cannot guess, but all the evidence shows that Bacon, in spite of his superior status, was no more than the lieutenant of Lister."

The Position of the Toiling Masses

One of the greatest natural disasters ever recorded in history was the horrible Black Death of 1348-9, which claimed the life of at least one-third of the whole population. This affected especially the poorer classes. But an exploiting class knows no pity and the labouring masses were called upon to pay all the damages. Instead of the average daily wage amounting to 3d. or 4d. a maximum wage had been fixed for all hired labour at about 2d.—3d., and this when living had become much dearer. Even before the pestilence the workers' life had been unenviable. During the harvest season he did not suffer much, but in the winter time his life was hardly human. Thus it was quite impossible for them to comply with the draconic regulations—with their penalties of branding and outlawry. Needless to say, the rich at the same time lived in a luxury as was never experienced before.

The discontent of the workers grew intense. We may see this from the following lines taken from William Langland's "Piers Plowman":—

"Labourers that have no land but live on the work of their hands, deign no longer to dine on day-and-night old vegetables, Penny-ale will not suit them nor a piece of bacon. But they must have fresh meat or fish, fried or baked, and that hot and hotter to prevent the chill of their mouth. Unless he be highly paid he will chide, and will curse the time when he was made a workman, and then he curses the King and all his council, after that they have made such a law to chastise the labourers."

The cruel persecution of the town and village wage-slaves, the heartless exploitation and molestation of the villeins, created a revolutionary atmosphere in which the best of the oppressed (joined by some of more fortunate origin) began to preach the gospel of revolution and freedom and even to initiate some sort of organization.

The simple letters of Jack the Miller, Jack the Carter, Jack Trewman, are, really, mediæval manifestoes, in which the leaders called upon the land-workers, the millers and other working men to hold together against oppression, guile and falsehood, and be ready for action because "now is time." As against feudal property they preached the abolition of serfdom and common ownership of land—as was the case in the time of the village community, many remnants of which were still in existence. True, many did not go so far, but were satisfied with demanding equal division of land among cultivators. Still we find that utopian communism (it could be only

utopian in those times) was not only the dream of some idealists but was also enormously popular amongst the exploited masses.

Against the immorality and corruption of the propertied classes they were the heralds of a time when right and truth will reign in a country governed by those who work honestly and not those who live in idleness and immorality.

The moral corruption of the court, nobles, and clergy, had attained such a limit as is only the case in a time of social dissolution. All contemporary writers are witnesses to this.

The Lawyers and the Poll Tax

The people who had done the most to torture the poor in every way, were the lawyers. If the poor man had any grievance against his lord, be this a nobleman or a priest, he was not only almost sure to lose his case, however right he was, but was even liable to severe fine or imprisonment for libel. Under these circumstances the landlords and their bailiffs could do what they liked with the unprotected villeins. Hence the great hatred of these against the whole legal profession, which they wanted to destroy together with all the lawyers and legal documents. The law being closed to them, they tried direct methods against their oppressors. They ran away; they refused to work; they used arson in revenge.

Under such conditions came the news that Parliament had voted a new poll-tax of three groats upon every person above 15 years' old. The obligation was equal on the Duke of Lancaster and on his poorest villein's 15 year old daughter.

This famous poll-tax was agreed upon after long deliberations, during which the nobles declared that the clergy had acquired almost all the wealth of the country, and the clergy retorted with a similar imputation. In the end they all agreed that the peasants and workers should pay the bulk of the money needed. The news caused great consternation. Plague, drought and disastrous war were all less feared than the ruthless inquisition with which a tax-collection was connected.

Sir Charles Oman tries to prove that everybody did not pay the due tax. But this proves only that the tax collected did not go into the Treasury—was probably stolen by the various commissioners. But, even if the people tried to evade this obligation, nothing can justify the conduct of the inquisitory commission. The age of young girls they tried to ascertain through indecent bodily inspection. Sir Charles does not like to speak about such and similar incidents, but they are characteristic of the methods applied by the mediæval oppressors. Influential people became rich through the inexorable and fraudulent collection of the taxes. Not a single chronicler, however reactionary he may be, fails to record irregularities in the collection of the tax. Such facts are never recorded in legal documents—when the law is administered by the persons who have themselves committed the felonies.

The Beginnings of the Revolution

The provocations of the tax-inquisitors did not remain without answer. The Essex men were the first to revolt against the authorities and on the 30th of May they put to flight the commissioner Thomas Belknap as well as the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, Robert Belknap, who was sent to Brentwood to punish the malcontents.

At once word was sent to Kent, and to other neighbouring districts.

Kent was soon aflame and Commissioner John Legge driven back in the same fashion as his friend. This was on the 4th of May and in the days following the insurrection in Kent spread to Rochester, Maidstone, and, on the 10th, to Canterbury.

By the evening of the 12th of May the main body of Kentish insurgents were at the outskirts of London under the leadership of Wat Tyler and John Ball. In the county their work was very systematic.

The History of English Revolutions—THE PEASANTS' REVOLT, 1381

They gathered the peasants from every village they entered for the march to London; they burnt all legal documents (the written token of their servitude and the basis of endless extortions); beheaded several lawyers; opened all the prisons and released the prisoners; and destroyed the manor houses of some hated enemies.

Very few people were hurt by the insurgents and there was no plunder.

Wat Tyler and his colleagues knew very well, that if men start to plunder, nothing can hold them together for common political action. They took very strong measures against murderers. Some writers speak of frequent blackmail. In most cases this was only the forced return of payments and fines extorted against right and law.

Wat Tyler

There is so much confusion about the greatness or otherwise of Wat Tyler that most workers do not know the part of Wat Tyler in this rebellion. A revolutionary leader must be judged from his part in the revolution itself. And Wat Tyler, from all what we know, was the strongest and most conscious personification of all the fervour and revolutionary enthusiasm which brought the tens of thousands of peasants to London. It was Wat Tyler who led them. It was his death (so much sought for by his enemies) that marks the dissolution of the great revolutionary army which had threatened the end of the old regime. He had authority over the masses and enforced a discipline, which made possible the unification of revolutionary energy for a common end. He was a man of action—the direct opposite of a mob demagogue. He had clear sight and a judgment which was not misled by empty promises. The only mistake which he committed—a fatal one it proved—was due to the fact that even he could not quite realise the incredible perfidy and infamy of the ruling classes and that he was regardless of his personal safety when it was a question of common action. What reactionaries call his "magniloquence" is nothing but his revolutionary conviction, and the understanding with which he could speak in the language of the new order. His alleged insolent tongue is the fearless audacity and pride of a rebel; his imputed ambition the undaunted belief in the historical role of the insurgents.

He was a realist and united practically all the good qualities that a revolutionary leader needs. If he went a little too far with negotiations and at this point he did not break off the endless parleys, this was due to the backwardness of his colleagues who could not appreciate the need for prompt and vigorous action. This may be seen from the fact that there was no successor to him in South England. The only leader who comes near to him in resoluteness and capacity for revolutionary leadership is Geoffrey Lister, the leader in East Norfolk, of whom we shall speak later.

John Ball

The other great figure of the revolution is John Ball. He is not so much a man of action as an agitator and idealist. Though far from a pacifist he would suffer cruel persecutions for his Communistic doctrines sooner than do any harm to the aggressors or lead a revolutionary campaign. He was a prophet and not a soldier. But he must have been a wonderful speaker and a man of great human feeling. All the chroniclers admire the bravery with which he faced the gallows; maintaining every word and proud of all his deeds during the revolution.

That he was a utopian Communist is obvious from his sermons and the letters

which he sent to animate the malcontents. Best known of his sermons is this:—

"My good friends, things cannot go well in England nor ever will until everything shall be in common, when there shall be neither villains nor lords and all distinctions levelled, when the lords shall be no more masters than ourselves. How ill they have used us! And for what reason do they hold us in bondage? Are we not all descended from the same parents, Adam and Eve? And what can they show, or what reasons give, why they should be more the masters than ourselves? Except perhaps that they make us labour and work for them to spend. They are clothed in velvets and rich stuffs, ornamented with ermine and other furs, while we are forced to wear poor cloth. They have wines, spices and fine bread, when we have only rye and the refuse of the straw, and if we drink it must be water. They have handsome seats and manors, when we must brave the wind and rain in our labours in the field; but it is from our labour they have wherewith to support their pomp. We are called slaves; and if we do not perform our services we are beaten, and we have not any sovereign to whom we can complain or who wishes to hear us and do us justice. Let us go to the King, who is young, and remonstrate with him on our servitude, telling him we must have it otherwise, or that we shall find a remedy for it ourselves. If we wait on him in a body, all these who come under the appellation of slaves, or are held in bondage, will follow us in the hopes of being free. When the King shall see us we shall obtain a favourable answer, or we must then seek ourselves to amend our condition."

The revolution of 1381 was not a religious movement, it was a social revolution necessitated by economic changes, and John Ball was the ablest spokesman of the earthly, but noble, ideas of the social revolutionaries. Froissart, the flattering courtier, who hated everybody who was not a knight at least, records that "he was much beloved by the people. Some who wished no good declared it was very true what he preached, and murmuring to each other as they were going to the fields, on the road from one village to another, or at their different houses, said 'John Ball preaches such and such thing, and he speaks truth.'"

The English people as early as the 14th century were moved by Communistic ideas (which then could be, however beautiful, no more than ideal dreams). The name of John Ball, this prophetic forerunner among Communist agitators, should be held in grateful memory by the British labouring masses.

At the Gates of London

The Kentish insurgents arrived at the boundaries of London on the 12th June. Their first work (in Southwark) was to destroy the Marshalsea prison and to set free the prisoners. They burnt a manor in Lambeth belonging to the Chancellor, Sudbury (who was also the Archbishop of Canterbury) and, as the Anonymous Chronicle records, "The Commons of Kent cast down a certain house of ill-fame near London Bridge, which was in the hands of Flemish women, and they had the said house to rent from the Mayor of London."

[Sir Charles Oman, who faithfully follows this very same Chronicle in most things, omits this characteristic incident, probably because it does not confirm his well-known dogma about the morality of the ruling angels and the immorality of the insurgent devils.]

The hate of the insurgents was directed principally against the prisons; the houses of debauchery; the corrupt lawyers; the leading statesmen who were personally responsible for the terrible state of affairs (Sudbury, the Chancellor; Hales, the Treasurer; John of Gaunt; the Duke of Lancaster) and against men famous for their cruelty and usury (as Richard Lyons, the noted speculator).

The "impartial and truthful" historian, Sir Charles Oman, makes the following comment:—

"The wealthier citizens quite understood the perils that were involved in the collection of a great body of ignorant peasants led by adventurers and fanatics. If the horde entered their

gates, it would almost inevitably get to the liquor and fall to riot and plundering."

A King's Council was held in the Tower. The Mayor of London raised the drawbridge of London Bridge and closed the gates. When the Kentish men arrived at Blackheath, where they encamped, the Essex men, moving in concert, reached Mile End, and Hertfordshire men Highbury. The insurgents in South England had made an organised concentrated march upon London, the three main bodies coming from the south-west, north-west, and north. Writers who cannot understand the great surprise of the Londoners, forget this, also the wonderful rapidity with which the insurgents carried out this great movement.

On the morning of the 11th June, Wat Tyler with his men was yet in Canterbury. On the evening of the next day they were at Blackheath. A really wonderful achievement for a revolutionary army!

Before the Royal Court and the Corporation of London could realise the danger, London was already surrounded from several sides by enormous crowds of insurgents. These latter had good allies within the walls in the lower strata of the population of London who were eagerly waiting for an opportunity to settle accounts with their exploiters.

The Council decided to play for time until the insurgents were compelled to return home from lack of food. They sent messages to the insurgents calling upon them to go home, promising them amendment for their injuries. The insurgents were not to be satisfied by empty words. They want to see the King, to speak to him, personally, about their grievances. The naive masses could not understand other than that he, the "father of his people," would be touched when he hears the terrible truth of their sufferings. Events were to cure them of this delusion, but on the 12th June and the following few days they hoped for much from a personal conversation with the King.

It was decided that the King should go and see the insurgents at Blackheath. The morning following (13th) the King with his councillors went to Blackheath on a barge, but frightened by the great multitude of the revolutionary army and by the big noise they made, they returned swiftly to the Tower without landing.

London taken by the Rebels

The insurgents, angered, advanced to London. Alderman Walter Sybyle lowered the drawbridge and let the Kentish men through London Bridge, whilst Alderman William Tonge opened Aldgate for the Essex men, and London was in the hands of the revolutionists.

When in London the insurgents were joined by the London workmen. Wat Tyler at once surrounded the Tower. A considerable number of insurgents set about destroying the most wonderful palace of that time—the Savoy—which the hated Duke of Lancaster was building and ornamenting with all sorts of treasures at a time when the biggest part of the population was suffering in dire need.

The poor and proud insurgents did not want the blood-stained jewels and money of the Duke, they "were zealous to do right and justice and not to rob and steal." Plunder was prohibited under capital punishment, and a man who stole a jewel was at once beheaded.

The Temple, the chief residence of the lawyers, was also destroyed, and all the available muniments burnt. The same happened to the Priory of St. John's, Clerkenwell (the Prior was Robert Hales, the Treasurer, particularly hated by the masses).

The prisons of Fleet and Newgate were levelled with the ground. The only people who lost their lives were some Flemish merchants. There was great animosity against these foreign merchants, not because they were foreigners—the leader of the Lowestoft (Suffolk) insurgents was himself a foreigner from Holland, Richard Ressh—but because their competition, which perhaps was not too honest sometimes, caused great unemployment and suffering amongst the native apprentices and workmen, for which they were held personally responsible.

[The rest of this brilliant study we are forced to hold over till next week.]



J.F.H.



"We have the payne and traveyle, rayne and wynd in the feldes." . . . John Ball's speech.

Drawn by J.F.H. for H. G. WELL's "Outlines of History" (Cassells).

MERCENARY MURDERERS

By W. PAUL

BY its reactionary propaganda on behalf of the members of the Russian Social Revolutionary Party, at present on trial at Moscow, the Second International is rendering another great service to the enemies of the Soviet Republic. The Second International has at last roused itself to enthusiastic action and has embarked on an energetic campaign against the Russian Communists which is assisting the imperialists of all lands. It has not displayed such energy since it led the masses of the various countries against each other, in 1914, at the behest of the capitalist war-mongers.

Mr. J. R. Macdonald, the well-known indemnity champion and leader of the Second International, is now anxious to become as popular as Mrs. Snowden is in reactionary circles. He yearns to wear the mantle of the great Horatio who was, amongst many things, Britain's most relentless opponent of Bolshevism. What better tactic could Mr. Macdonald adopt, at a moment when his waning political influence is at very low ebb, than to denounce the Russian Government for daring to put on trial certain misguided gentlemen who were opposed to it? Everybody knows, from Basil Thompson right down to Jimmy Thomas and the *Morning Post*, that the speediest way to become a popular idol with political reactionaries and the subsidised press, is to make a spirited attack upon the leaders of the Russian Soviet Republic.

Now, who are these people who are on trial in Moscow? First of all, they are members of the Russian Social Revolutionary Party.

This organisation has always advocated, in opposition to the Communists, the policy of individual assassination as one way of overcoming its political enemies.

The Communists have always argued that the force of the social revolution rests in the organised mass power of the proletariat and not in deeds of individual terrorism. Before the days of the Bolshevik revolution this difference in revolutionary tactics, which was one of many things that separated the Communists from the Social Revolutionaries, caused fierce struggles in the ranks of the Russian Labour movement.

When the Soviets rose to power many of the most clearly poised members of the Social Revolutionary Party stood firmly by the side of the Communists in their heroic efforts to direct and protect the revolution against all sorts and conditions of reactionaries. There were other members, however, like many prominent Labour leaders in Britain, who were furious at the success of the Communists and who allied themselves with capitalist enemies in order to defeat the revolutionary achievements of the peasants and workers. Thus, since the rise of the Soviet Republic the most dangerous enemy inside its gate has been the Social Revolutionary Party which failing to stir up the Russian masses against the Government,

resorted to deeds of assassination, directed at the leaders of the Communist Party, in order to try and succeed in its foul reactionary conspiracy.

Just as water rises to its own level, so the imperialist cliques, who were attempting to smash Soviet Russia by blockades and armed forces, soon came in contact with the Social Revolutionary Party and paid it money to facilitate its work of murdering the leaders of the Soviet. In self-defence the Soviet Government arrested several of these active hired assassins. These are the people who are now on trial at Moscow. These are the "noble idealists" over whom the *Morning Post* and J. R. Macdonald are creating such a fuss. It was the same capitalist papers who are now praising the prisoners on trial at Moscow, that howled aloud for the blood of James Connolly after the Dublin rising; it is the same J. R. Macdonald who then maintained a cowardly silence when his comrade, A. Henderson, retained his office

in the Government that executed the wounded Connolly.

The most terrific indictment at the trial of the members of the Russian Social Revolutionary Party will be the evidence of those who recently left that organisation in disgust, when they found out that it was a venal tool in the hands of the Entente imperialists against the Soviet Government. Two of the most daring Social Revolutionaries were Semenov and Lydia Komopliova. They were desperately heroic. They were the instruments who put into operation the plots and conspiracies concocted by the leaders of their party. They were, at the beginning, opposed to the leadership of the Communist Party in the Soviet revolution, and acting on behalf of their organisation they planned to murder such people as Volodarsky, Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, etc. In accordance with their instructions they murdered Volodarsky. So great was the indignation of the Russian masses at this deed that the Social Revolutionary Party was afraid to claim credit for the murder. It had hoped that this, and a few other assassinations, would intimidate the Communists and force them to abdicate; it also believed that such murders would put courage into the opponents of the Soviets and stimulate them to plan "a mass rising" against the revolutionary government. It also believed that the murder of Lenin and Trotsky would enable it to push forward to political control as the Party that had destroyed the "dictators."

ALBERT INKPIN

should be released from Pentonville Prison on Friday the 23rd inst., at 8 a.m.

The plot to blow up Trotsky's train miscarried but Fanny Kaplan, a member of the Social Revolutionary Party was successful in shooting two poisoned bullets into Lenin. This crime caused a tremendous outburst on the part of the masses against the Social Revolutionary Party, the leaders of which again denied that they had organised the attempted assassination. It was these denials by the leaders of the Social Revolutionary Party that compelled people like Semenov and Komopliova to reflect upon their murder and bomb tactics. They began to notice that while they were risking their lives by carrying out assassinations the leaders of the Social Revolutionaries who were in safe hiding, immediately denied and repudiated their own policy when it created a condition of affairs that imperilled their own skins.

When in addition to this they discovered that the Social Revolutionary Party was in touch with the reactionaries of the Entente, and was also working hand in hand with Ludendorff, and received money from these sources, then the more honest members of the Social Revolutionary Party realised that they were subsidised tools being used against the Revolution. They had honestly imagined that the Communists were betraying the revolution. To save the Revolution they were prepared to commit murder; they were anxious and willing to make any sacrifice and they held their own lives as nothing compared with the ideals they served. From the moment, however, they found that their policy was aiding the counter-revolutionaries and was assisting the enemies of international socialism, from that moment "on them a great light shined" and they saw that the Communists were struggling valiantly to consolidate the Revolution and were doing it successfully. Thus hundreds of active and honest members of the Social Revolutionary Party left that organisation and threw in their lot with the Communists. Many of them will give evidence against the Social Revolutionary prisoners now on trial at Moscow.

The British press will give the story of the trial coloured, as usual, against the Soviet Government. Its grief for the prisoners will be real inasmuch as they failed to murder the Communist leaders in Russia. The Second International is no

doubt very sorry too that the prisoners failed to carry out their murderous projects. Such a failure casts a certain amount of reflection upon its efficiency. In Germany, under a Government manned by leaders of the Second International, it caused it no trouble to clear Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg out of the way. Here in Britain, Arthur Henderson, a distinguished Second Internationalist, sat cheek by jowl with his imperialist colleagues when they sent the gallant Irish revolutionary socialist, James Connolly, to his death.

We yield to no one in our admiration for those bold spirits who denounce tyranny wherever it plants its capitalist heel. But we have nothing but contempt for those mean souls who can only attack a proletarian government defending itself against mercenary murderers—particularly if that government is thousands of miles away. The Macdonalds are bold men when denouncing revolutionary governments abroad that are crushing reactionaries, but they are as timid as lambs when in their own country a reactionary government is crushing revolutionaries.

More people are being tried at Moscow for crimes against the proletarian revolution than those whose names appear on the indictment. The unwritten names include all the prominent leaders of the Second International in this and other countries.

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To the Conference Delegates

An Appeal by W. GALLACHER

COMRADES—Delegates to the Labour Party Conference.

I wish to make an earnest appeal to you—an appeal for the consolidation of the whole of the working class movement.

Face to face with the accomplished fact of a well-organised and thoroughly united employing class—you, the delegates of a broken and defeated working-class—defeated according to a well-developed plan—surely you will not, because of antipathy that may have been aroused towards individual Communists, give your support to the proposal to exclude the Communists and thereby damn the working-class movement to a further period of disorganisation and internecine strife?

Why should there be all this trouble about the Communist Party's application? The Labour Party stands for the emancipation of the workers. So does the Communist Party. No one will dispute our earnestness so far as *this* task is concerned.

The Labour Party leaders, however, make the claim that the change can be brought about constitutionally and without the use, or exhibition of, any kind of organised force. But suppose the Labour Party leaders are wrong? Suppose the employing class refuses to quit—and decides to make a fight for it? Are we to understand that the Labour Party will then give up its attempt to end the system that has been productive of so much misery to the toiling masses? Surely not! Surely the fight will go on and all the means necessary to ensure success be unhesitatingly made use of.

The Communist Party recognises the Labour Party as the political party accepted by the masses and if affiliated will earnestly and faithfully assist it in its struggles against the forces of capitalism wherever those forces express themselves.

At the same time the Communist Party will claim the right to express the opinions

that sooner or later the capitalist class will endeavour to break up the working class organisation by the use of force, and that the working class organisations will have to make preparations to withstand them.

Is it because we hold this view that we are to be treated as the Ishmaels of the British Labour movement?

I would appeal to you—to each individual delegate—to consider well what is at stake. By rejecting the Communists you will not seriously affect us as a party. We won't shed any tears about it—although we recognise quite clearly that it will postpone indefinitely any possibility of a real concentration of working-class forces. But you will undoubtedly give cause for very great rejoicing in the ranks of the enemy.

You know this. You know that if you reject and attack the Communist Party, the capitalist class and its servile press will applaud you. And you know that there's never applause from that direction when you serve the true interests of the class you represent.

At a time like this when the working class is being battered down ruthlessly into the pit of hopelessness, apathy, and despair, we must all of us beware, lest any action, prompted by personal prejudice, has the effect, not of helping our class to rise, but of forcing them further down.

Again, it is said we are not orthodox in our belief in Parliament.

Comrades, I ask you?—In all seriousness I ask you: Was the Labour Party built up solely to foster a belief in Parliament? Those thousands of earnest workers, sacrificed their all too hard-earned shillings—have they given their time and energy without any thought of personal reward, to build up a working-class political organisation that would raise such a question on an application for affiliation?

We believe that Parliament can be used in the fight against capitalism; but that

the change from capitalism to socialism will bring about a change from our so-called political democracy to the only real democracy—Industrial Democracy.

It is absurd to burn incense at the shrine of our present-day democracy, when the mass of the workers have to live their lives under the black shadow of "Managerial Functions."

The task of the Labour Party is not to popularise Parliament; its task is to play its part in the fight for working-class emancipation.

I cannot warn the Conference delegates too earnestly that a tendency exists—(it appears to have captured the minds of many members of the Labour Party) to think that instead of Parliament being used to aid the workers, the workers should be used to bolster up Parliament.

If this notion is allowed to grow it will be fatal for the Labour Party and for the working class. Such an attitude can only play into the hands of the enemy.

Comrades! The Communist Party is organised to fight capitalism until its power is broken, and the age-long oppression of the workers ended with the coming of the new social order.

We who are members of the Communist Party have toiled with you in the workshops, have struggled with you in the streets, have been faithful always to the cause that you as well as we hold dearer than life itself.

Now we ask you to allow us to associate with you in the political fight, not for any ulterior motive, not for personal gain or Party ends, but because the one urgent need of the moment is working-class unity.

With this thought in mind I ask you to consider our application for affiliation, feeling assured that, if you place the well-being of the workers as your first consideration, it will not be hastily rejected.

NOTES: Political, Industrial and Occasional

Our "English Revolution" readers will share our pride in this current number. The names of the contributors—A. Macmanus, W. Gallacher, J. T. Walton Newbold, F. Willis, C. M. Roebuck, W. Paul, R. W. Postgate, Alexander John and T. A. Jackson—come as near to a perfectly representative list of Communist writers as it is possible to imagine. And the substance of their articles is, we feel, equally characteristic.

England: Mother It is a number that should of Communism prove especially useful to the delegates to the Labour Party Conference at Edinburgh next week. The true character of the British Constitution, State and people, will be brought before many of them as never before. It will be news to many that there ever was a Revolution in England; to others matter of astonishment to learn that London was ever captured in a rising of the "lower orders." Most of all will it be news that the British workers were the first in Europe to move in a Communist direction and that England may with truth be called the natural cradle of "Bolshevik methods."

All Eyes on Edinburgh While this number was passing through the press the Second International was meeting at Golders' Green. Everybody present worked overtime dressing the shop-window for Macdonald, Henderson, Webb and Co., so that there should be no hitch when the burning question of Communist Party affiliation comes up for discussion. The trial of the S.R.'s Georgia,--Georgia, the trial of the S.R.'s—so the speeches went until the delegates fell exhausted before plates of strawberries and cream; where a Press photographer dutifully "shot" them.

The Lising, Aping, Fantasticoes To hear them one would imagine that instead of being the ill-conditioned set of scoundrels they are (see the articles on

pages 5 and 7 of this issue) the treacherous counter-revolutionaries now on trial at Moscow possessed all the heroic qualities and all the devotion to the proletariat of Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, and James Connolly!

Imagine a "leader" of the workers taking as his standard "justice as we know it in this country!"

True justice, in Shortt!!

The Golders Green International It was not for nothing that these inspired debates took place at "Golders' Green." American comrades can get some idea of it by imagining a carefully expurgated edition of Greenwich village—in Jaeger undervests. But nowhere else on earth is there such a paradise of petit-bourgeois "intellectual" peacock-ery as is found in Golders' Green.

The Second International lapped up the atmosphere like flappers at an ice-cream bar.

The United Democratic Af-front Macmanus' trenchant criticism of the desolating middle-class influence which has paralysed the proletarian impulses of the rank-and-file of the Labour Party—given in his official statement on the back page of this number—received a confirmation more complete than if it had been designed on purpose.

The Conference agreed—Henderson, Macdonald, Sydney Webb and all!—that there ought to be formed a "united proletarian democratic front" to resist "Monarchist Reaction from the Right and Dictatorship from the Left!"

The net result of which policy would be—the bourgeois Republic.

Workers unite!—to win for yourselves rulers like Noske, Poincare, and Harding!

Disruption The Conference also congratulated Amsterdam on a successful resistance to "disruptive tactics"—that is upon the ex-

pulsion of Communists from the Trades Unions.

And this in between bleats of sorrow over the Traitors on Trial at Moscow who among other things sought (by forming "nuclei") to disrupt the Red Army in the face of its enemies.

We asked for a united front to fight the Boss Class. The Golders' Green International offers us a united prostration before all the political swindles of Capitalist Society.

The Liars and Lenin The press has been full of comic variations on a theme first composed in one of the Baltic States. Starting with the story that Lenin had gone mad and was confined in an asylum, the story as it approached western Europe became that he had had a nervous breakdown, was suffering from the after-effects of blood-poisoning, etc. The true facts are given by the following telegram received from Moscow, under date June 18:—

"The rumours of the appointment of a directorate owing to Lenin's indisposition are absolutely groundless. No such intention is entertained in Government circles. The following bulletin was published to-day concerning Lenin's health: 'The disturbing abdominal symptoms which have proceeded for ten days have now disappeared completely. The intestinal organs are perfectly in order. The patient's temperature and pulse are normal. The disturbances in circulation of the blood have ceased. The patient has left his bed and feels well, but is fretting under the inactivity prescribed by the physicians.'—(Signed) Professors: Klemperer, Kramer; Doctors: Kozhevnikov, Levin; Asst. People's Commissary for Health: Soloviev."

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THE MOSCOW TRIALS

By C. M. ROEBUCK

WHO are the Socialist Revolutionaries? Before the Revolution they were a group of theorists, overwhelmingly from the noble and propertied classes, with practically no workmen amongst them.

During the imperialist war the Party was almost to a man anti-German and patriotic. When in power during the first period of the Russian Revolution they showed not the slightest sign of any capacity to deal with the problem for which the masses were demanding immediate solutions.

After the November Revolution, the Socialist Revolutionaries passed into violent opposition to the Soviet Government. Thus far their history is that of any party of the Second International and one can quite understand that body's care for their safety.

But, unlike the Mensheviks, unlike the "Social Democratic" parties of Western Europe, they did not confine their anti-Soviet activity to pacifist appeals to the abstract ideas of right and justice; to cheap sneers at the Russian working class; or to heavy philosophic treatises on democracy.

The Socialist Revolutionaries dealt in deeds not words. On the morning on which the Constituent Assembly opened, they attempted to raise a rebellion in Petrograd against the Soviet Government. It failed.

Disruption, Murder and Sabotage

They then took the matter seriously in hand. Special detachments were told off to enter the Soviet institutions and sabotage their working; others were sent into the Red Army to gain every possible information about stores, distribution of troops, etc.; others went into the countryside inciting the peasants by means of fantastic rumours to burn the public granaries, tear up railway lines, and blow up bridges, murder Soviet officials, etc. Finally, "fighting groups" were formed in Moscow and Petrograd which assassinated Volodarsky and Uritsky, and which nearly murdered Lenin. When Allied intervention began in the summer of 1918, the Socialist Revolutionaries welcomed the foreign troops and the Russian White generals with open arms. At Yaroslavl they revolted to assist the Czecho-Slovaks; at Archangel they formed a government under the benign auspices of General Poole; at Omsk, Admiral Koltchak, supported by British and American troops, was their patron. In the Far East they collaborated—and are still doing so—with the Japanese. Their agents abroad, first and foremost, Burtsev and Savinkov, have gone the rounds of every continental government—France, Poland, Roumania, Finland—cadging funds and munitions for the would-be successors to the Romanoff throne, Koltchak, Denikin, Alexieff, Wrangel, Petlura, and Pilsudsky. Within Russia their secret agents have developed a perfected system of espionage in the Red Army, selling military secrets abroad and destroying the property of the Russian workers and peasants.

This is a brief summary of what the Socialist Revolutionaries did during the Russian Revolution. To this and more than this, when the State indictment was read to them during the first days of the trial, the Socialist Revolutionary leaders confessed, adding that they were proud to be responsible for these attacks on the Soviet Government, and would do as much again if they were released. And yet the Second International has the effrontery to compare the case of these men, who during all their activity have never had any characteristic that would justify the title of "Socialist and Revolutionary" which they adopted, with that of political prisoners under a capitalist regime—Inkpin, Debs,

Larkin, the I.W.W., Marty and Badina, Brandler, Muna, Kingisepp, who never conducted armed rebellion, and in defence of whom the Second International never raised a finger!

The Russian working class abstained from passing judgment upon these its inveterate enemies (whom it caught red-handed at various times, and whom it could have shot out of hand like many of their minor dupes and agents), until it had practically cleared the Republic of their foreign allies and could bring all the vast array of evidence into one damning exposure.

This opportunity came when the Extraordinary Commission was abolished and its prisoners were handed over to the regular judicial authorities for trial.

The Second International took the opportunity afforded it by the desperate position of the world working class for making it a condition for a united working-class front that the enemies of the working-class should be beforehand freed from the death penalty and given the chance of defence by Messrs. Vandervelde, Theodore Liebknecht, etc.

Let there be no mistake or ambiguity: this was distinctly advanced as a preliminary condition by Ramsay MacDonald himself, and accepted as such by the Berlin Conference.

The Second International did not keep its part of the contract, which was to assist in the calling of an international labour congress; and the Soviet Government would have been perfectly entitled to refuse Vandervelde admission, and is still at liberty, if the Tribunal adjudges the S.R.'s worthy of death, to carry out the sentence.

Justice!

It is comic to find the advocates of the Second International writing that "the whole affair is a travesty of justice as we understand it in this country" (Labour Press Service), and quarrelling with the procedure of the Tribunal. Only last week it was borne in upon the whole British newspaper-reading public that British justice is class-justice, which defends the interests of a rich souteneur against all comers, but can hang a half-witted boy from the working-class with a clear conscience. Russian justice is also class-justice, defending the interests of the workers against the exploiters and their parasites. In Moscow it is the souteneurs and the swindlers of international politics who are on trial; and if the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal establishes the connection of the S.R.'s with a series of crimes against the State and the individual—crimes which they make no attempt to disavow—it bears responsibility before the Russian workers and peasants *alone* for the decisions it takes.

What the Russian workers and peasants think they have shown by countless demonstrations—by the protests and contempt with which they met Vandervelde and his friends.

"These demonstrations are all a fake ordered by the Central Committee?" Then doubtless the November Revolution, with its myriads of workmen throwing themselves on the Cossacks unarmed, was also a fake?

Doubtless the four years' deathless story of the Red Army, starving and ragged, facing the tanks and aeroplanes of the foreign invader, is also a fake?

Doubtless the one-eighth of a pound of bread in two days, on which the factory workers heroically subsisted in 1918 and 1919 (largely owing to Socialist Revolutionary activity in the countryside) was also a fake?

Doubtless the march past of six hundred thousand men and women in Moscow on May Day, burning with enthusiasm to the genuineness of which every bourgeois bystander has testified, was also a "stage effect"?

No! the only "fake" in the whole affair has been the sudden solicitude displayed by the Second International over the gang of cut-throats and traitors to the working-class now on trial in Moscow. It is on a par with the solicitude shown over Lenin's health by the bourgeois press. The time is not yet gone by for an attempt to discredit the Soviet Government in the eyes of the workers, while the bourgeois press does the same for it in the eyes of the capitalists. The proletariat of Great Britain, mindful of James Connolly, and of Fisher and Spendiff, murdered in defence of trade union rights on the Rand, can see through the pretences of the Second International for what they are, and will meet them with the contempt—if necessary with the uncompromising opposition—which they deserve.

LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE AGENDA

By F. WILLIS

BECAUSE of my manifold sins the Editor has deputed me to write this article. I am instructed to conscientiously wade through the final agenda for the Twenty-Second Annual Conference of the Labour Party, to diligently study the amendments and comment thereon for the benefit of posterity, and the amusement of my family circle.

It is a form of penal servitude. The Editor is no friend of mine. Still less is he a friend of the readers of the COMMUNIST. Piously, and in a spirit of Christ-like resignation, I say concerning him and his beastly committee: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

So here goes.

* * *

In a previous article I reported that the original agenda consisted of 20 pages and 180 resolutions. My reputation for arithmetical accuracy being thus established, I applied for a rise—and got the sack. At the risk of still more terrible consequences I venture to report now that the agenda has swollen to 34 pages and that the number of amendments is in exact proportion to the increased size.

* * *

Incidentally, this final agenda has been somewhat loosely handled in the drafting. Perhaps the printer is to blame. Anyhow, one can hardly suppose that the S.D.F. delegates really desire "that immediate steps be taken to draft and issue a new Labour Party," however commendable that object may be. Yet this is exactly what their amendment to the party programme implies.

And it is certainly strange to find the Hampstead Labour Party seeking to amend their own short original resolution on National Finance by deleting all after the first dozen words, and substituting a long amendment covering a quarter of a page.

* * *

Allied to the question of Communist affiliation is that of the affiliation of the organised unemployed.

Stepney (a small village on the outskirts of London) is again to the fore with an affirmative demand.

In all probability this resolution will be carried. Unless all appearances lie, and British capitalism finds unsuspected reserves of energy, the organised unemployed will be a permanent feature of our "civilisation" to the end. To exclude them from any party claiming to be of the workers would be to exclude a good part of the working class itself. Which would be ridiculous; but by no means unexpected—in the present frame of mind of the leaders of the Labour Party.

Apparently no Questionnaire has been found necessary in this case. Why? Framing Questionnaires must be an excellent mental exercise. It is one to be encouraged. With a little development it should become a new national pastime.

* * *

On one point, undoubtedly, local Labour Parties in every part of the country are thoroughly sound.

Faced with sinister suggestions from certain quarters in favour of an understanding with Wee Frees and other uncouth outgrowths of the capitalist political organism, the reply, if the agenda is to be trusted, has been an unqualified "No."

Blackburn Labour Party started it with the original resolution, and there were no less than nine separate amendments all endeavouring to make the first negative still more emphatic.

Political independence represents the high water mark of working class political thought at the present moment. The position, as many of us remember, had to be fought for and won over a period of many years. Such as it is it represents a distinct advance from which there will be no going back. And though it falls very far short of our own Communist conceptions, the unanimity on this point is an augury of greater advance in the days to come.

* * *

The vendetta against the Communists does not stand by itself. A stern endeavour is being made to exclude two other

classes of persons from the Labour Party—Privy Councillors and Freemasons. We have strong objections against being classed with either alleged undesirables, feeling rather like a decent citizen applying for a summons who has been put by accident into the dock, with a ruffianly wife-beater, and a battered drunk of the night before.

In case this innocent remark might be misinterpreted it must be distinctly understood that no reflections whatever are intended against the private characters of either Privy Councillors or Freemasons. So far as we know they neither beat their wives nor get drunk. Nor, for the matter of that, are we in the dock.

Concerning Freemasonry nothing need be said here, for or against; but there is undoubtedly an overwhelming case against members of the Labour Party being allowed to hold office as Privy Councillors. Nearly a whole page of the agenda is devoted to resolutions against this practice, and the one solitary amendment sent in is from Motherwell Trades Council asking the Conference to declare:—

"That all members of the Privy Council be expelled from the Labour Party."

There will be a full dress debate on the question, and whichever way the decision goes an effective protest will be put up, which, although it will certainly receive the whole-hearted support of all Communist delegates will not be without a considerable measure of non-Communist support also.

* * *

As usual the general resolutions and amendments cover the whole field of home and foreign politics. Many of them are hardy annuals calling for no special mention except in so far as they mark an advance, or a falling away, from the thought of previous years. It is worthy of note, for instance, that nearly all the amendments to the usual "nationalisation" resolutions are in the direction of social ownership and workers' control instead of the "State" conception of the bureaucratic politician. But none of them reveal any real appreciation of the catastrophic world condition created by the collapse of capitalism.

* * *

On armaments, international treaties, and war, the agenda is distinctly pacifist. Yet, strange to say, not a single resolution mentions the one sincere move made for peace by any Government in our time, when the Russian delegates at Genoa put forward their proposal for general disarmament.

The one bellicose note struck in all the resolutions is from the Social Democratic Federation, which wants the Socialist and Labour Parties of all countries to be "free to support any nation forced by armed aggression to defend its independence or its democratic institutions."

No doubt the S.D.F. has in mind the next attack by capitalist governments on Soviet Russia.

* * *

The exceedingly strong feeling aroused by the savage aggression carried on by the Japanese Government in Siberia is expressed in two strongly-worded amendments from the London Trades Council and the Portsmouth Labour Party.

There is an excellent chance here for some enterprising delegate to make the speech of the Conference. The mass or authoritative and well collated information issued by such bodies as the "Hands off Russia" Committee should enable him to put a case that would command unanimous support and make this important question one of immediate public concern.

The demand for full recognition of Soviet Russia is taken for granted in any working class assembly nowadays. No one opposes it. Unfortunately in too many cases it is allowed to be qualified by statements of the "damning with faint praise" order that assuredly do not represent the real state of mind of the rank and file of the Labour Party itself.

It is high time some delegate got up on his hind legs at a Labour Party Conference and made a full-blooded defence of the Soviet regime from the standpoint of the

working class revolution, minimising nothing, overstating nothing, but insisting that the workers' struggle against capitalism anywhere must be supported without qualification, simply because it is the workers' struggle.

Just as one supports a strike against all comers, independent of any individual happenings. "In their struggles against the capitalist order, the workers are always right" is no bad motto to adopt either in home or foreign affairs. Will some delegate please note?

* * *

Not a single organisation has found it necessary to amend the utterly fatuous resolution of the Textile Workers calling for self-government for the people of India on Dominion lines.

Self-government means government by a people on any lines it thinks best, or it means nothing at all. To lay down in advance the lines on which a subject people shall be governed is to perpetuate the servitude against which they rebel. The people of India have as much right to lay down conditions of government for Lancashire cotton operatives as have the latter to conduct the reverse operation.

Verily the Kipling tradition in our elementary schools has much to answer for.

* * *

Fortunately another resolution from the Textile Workers, this time on Free Trade, gets badly mauled by an S.D.F. amendment asserting that "neither Free Trade nor Protection is in any way a solution of the problem of poverty."

How archaic it all reads! Joe Chamberlain is still stumping the country for Tariff Reform; H. M. Hyndman still following him round with a club: 1914-1918 has never been; the Russian Revolution is still unborn; and here we are in the giddy pre-war years again, pursuing the same old round, with about the same mechanical sense of time as a cuckoo clock.

* * *

On the question of unemployment the agenda is just as little satisfactory. Every resolution and amendment takes refuge in a delightfully vague demand for "adequate" maintenance for the out-of-work. Surely even a Labour Party Conference can descend at times from the abstract to the concrete. What is "adequate maintenance"? Sir Alfred Mond would reply in terms of skilly. My own idea would approximate to something slightly better than the first-class menu at the Hotel Ritz. Between these two extremes Labour Party delegates should at least be able to hit on a compromise.

Very humbly, and with a due sense of its own audacity, the Communist Party suggests that the demand should be brought down from the skies, and an agitation set on foot forthwith for work at trade union rates; or, failing that, maintenance on the same basis.

After all, the capitalists are the organisers of industry, are they not? Is it not about time they got on with the job? And if incapable, is it unreasonable to suggest that they be compelled to pay for the results of their own incompetence?

Or, better still, sacked—like any of their own office boys in the same circumstances.

* * *

Space does not permit dealing with many other items remaining on the agenda. Nor is it important. A Conference is only a Conference, and, in the nature of things, can only register, not do.

Nor do the workers' own feelings find full expression on the floor of a Conference.

One feels through all these pious resolutions and amendments painfully hammered out at many meetings a sense of the deep unrest and vague aspirations that are stirring the minds of the best among the workers. One feels that an atmosphere is being created that time, and the desperate situation of capitalism must develop.

One feels—well, after all, can these slow-moving British workers remain for ever penned up in the constitutional barriers they have so conscientiously built round themselves?

The Puritan Revolution

By T. A. JACKSON

DURING the Civil War in Britain each party to the conflict loudly protested—and with perfect sincerity—that it was fighting to preserve the ancient laws, rights, and customs of the Realm.

Each side suffered from the illusion that it was defending the law and the Constitution—each was, in fact, attempting its total subversion. The Commons were insisting upon something which, if granted, would have made them dictators. The simple fact that technical progress had destroyed the military power of the Feudal Aristocracy, and also the means of self-defence of the private citizen, made the control of a standing army mean dictatorship—especially so when in the hands of the class with a monopoly of the financial resources. The Commons were thus (albeit unknowingly) aiming at Revolution. The King and his allies of the landed aristocracy in fighting for military control and fiscal irresponsibility were attempting a counter-revolution which would have subjected the whole country to the dictatorship of the ground landlord class and its beloved monarch.

Economic and Social causes of Puritan Politics

It was the social development in the previous period—the rise of the bourgeois system of property and production at the expense of the feudal; the conversion of land into an alienable commodity; the conversion of agriculture from production for household and local use into production for market sale; the depreciation of the currency and the consequent revolution in prices; the growth of manufactures free from Guild restraints and (its pre-condition) the growth of merchants' capital simultaneous with industrial development as a special appendage of agricultural progress; the concentration of an industrial proletariat and semi-proletariat in the great cities—ist was these things that precipitated a struggle that lasted for a century. The fact that Feudal politics were necessarily connected with church organisation and authority in turn forced this semi-conscious struggle of the bourgeoisie for mastery to take the forms first of the Protestant Reformation, secondly of the Puritan Revolution in Britain.

In England the Reformation having begun as a Royal Contrivance and passed on to an orgy of aristocratic plunder before it became an intellectual and moral movement—the "Church" had been established on the State-controlled Lutheran model. It became even less accessible to popular influences that the Catholic Church had been—from the closing of the monastic road of entry into holy orders; and the concentration of church discipline in the hands of the Crown and church patronage in the hands of the large land-owning class. Its admirers were to be found among the landed gentry, in the Court, and among the dupes of the absolute monarchist ideology.

The conflict with the King, therefore, from including points of church discipline, extended to matters of church doctrine, and culminated on questions of the relation between Church and State, precisely because—the Established Church being an instrument for the supremacy of the Crown and of its allies the Landed Gentry—none but a reformed church could facilitate the emancipation of the merchants of the towns, the yeomen of the country and the craftsmen and proletarians in both....

London, the centre of merchants' and money-lenders' capital, and a chief focus of the new industry, and therefore of proletarian concentration, was the rebel stronghold through all the years up to the opening of the war. Norwich and the Eastern Counties, which had been until a century previous, the chief centre of population and wealth outside of London—a centre for sheep-farming and its allied trades of wool fabrication and transport—was held by the Parliament through all the vicissitudes of the struggle. Bristol (which, in the previous century, had usurped the place of Norwich in industrial and commercial pre-eminence, outside of London) and the West country around, which had become the textile area, was only wrested from the Parliament by a combination of Royalist daring and the incompetence of a Parliamentary general. The whole richly fertile and iron-producing south was the Parliament's likewise—leaving to the King only those parts (Wales, the counties easily accessible therefrom, and those exposed to attack from Scotland) which, from their situation, had been less able to provide means for the growth of any alternative to royal and aristocratic pre-eminence.

The first struggles of the war were for the possession of the arsenals, and here the Parliament won. The King, cut off at the outset, from the

great towns, had only the rural population to draw upon; and of these the only ones with the necessary equipment were the landed gentry who, in their persons, their sons, grooms, huntsmen, and body servants, were able from the first to supply a highly-effective but loosely-disciplined body of cavalry. The Parliament, in the town proletariat, had plenty of men to draw upon; but, although they had arms and equipment available, they were lacking in technical knowledge.

The King never conquered the difficulty of drilling an adequate Foot. The Parliament had such a force at the outset in the London trained bands (as Brentford and Gloucester proved). In the early battles the King's Horse nearly always swept the opposing Horse from the field; only to break themselves on the Parliamentary Foot. For want of cavalry the Parliament could make no serious use of their victories; for want of Foot the King could seldom gain any but superficial successes. The Parliamentary Foot was nearly always equal to its work—its cavalry, in the earlier part of the struggle, was the merest of rabbles. Here Charles had his advantage; and used it to the full. But for this the war could not have lasted six months: with this it lasted six years and more.

This rabble of "invisible" Horse, as their enemies called them, was from the first a matter of prime concern to the Parliamentary Generals. Cromwell saw the remedy at once. The cavaliers had all deep ties of emotion and interest to bind them to each other and to their cause.

Their pride of rank was affronted, and their sense of chivalry outraged, by the opposition of a mob of mechanics, and base-born asserters of moral and spiritual equality. Their sense of order and decency was shocked at the Anabaptist incendiarism which threatened to destroy everything which had made their delicacy, refinement, and luxury possible. The traditions of centuries made them fight to the last sooner than endure the shame of defeat at the hands of those who, but yesterday, as it were, had as serfs, cringed for their favour and flinched at their frown.

The Cavalier had to sustain him a mighty emotional force. The weakness of the Royalist Infantry, recruited as it was from outside the scope of his class interest and traditions, proved the point and enforced the moral. To meet the Cavaliers, a body had to be recruited who could oppose an enthusiasm equal to their own.

The Civil War—The New Model

"Only truly godly men," said Cromwell, "can face these 'men of honour.'" From the first, in recruiting his regiment of horse, he selected only those who, on examination, proved to be well grounded in the Faith, diligent in searching the Scriptures, powerful in prayer, and steadfast in all godliness of living. In modern English—he recruited a body of "extremists," whose revolutionary class-consciousness provided a moral fervour and a sense of solidarity.

Counter-revolutionary Frenzy under Rupert was matched, and more than matched, by Ultra-Revolutionary Fervour under Cromwell.

At Marston Moor the "Ironsides" met the recklessness of Rupert with a sustained and exalted enthusiasm which not only turned a muddled disorder into a crushing victory, but shattered for ever the myth of Cavalier invincibility. Cromwell's regiment had revolutionised the war.

It was clear that Manchester, Essex, Waller, and most of the Parliamentary Commanders, had no liking for a drastic revolution which would shift political power to the lower orders. A compromise with the King was very much more to their interests and liking. But how to effect such a compromise was a problem which, in face of the inflamed class-consciousness of the reactionary Cavaliers, could in no wise be solved. Even if Charles were willing to sacrifice them, these Cavaliers were in no mood to be sacrificed. The "lower orders" for their part were also in no mood to be sacrificed. Compromise was out of the question. The war had to be fought out in the only possible form—a fight to a finish between the extremes of revolution and reaction.

Marston Moor brought matters to a head. The mercantile and financial bourgeois gave way. Their aristocratic Parliamentary Commanders were relieved of their commands; the army was re-organised on Cromwell's "New Model," and the Parliament Army became the organised expression of the revolutionary petit-bourgeois and proletarian—a concentration, drilled and armed, of the thorough going enthusiasm of that Independency and Anabaptism which it had been the endeavour of every party, till then in power, to stamp out of existence.

With the formation of the New Model the English Puritan Revolution entered upon its positive phase. Till then the conscious object of the Parliamentary leaders had been no more than the negative one of defeating the attempt at Royalist counter-revolution. From now on emerged, in ever-intensifying strength, the aim of a thorough "root and branch" extermination of the "malignant" royal and aristocratic obstacles to the social dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

While the King held the field, Parliament still nominally ruled. But the altered tone and temper of the Revolution soon appeared in the incidents of the campaign and in the morale and capacity of the New Modelled Army. A few months saw the King's forces swept out of sight. His reckless chivalry were tumbled into ruin in the attempt to break the immovable infantry, or smashed into annihilation by the terrible onset of the psalm-chanting horse. His last strongholds stormed, and his last Colonels either surrendered or fled overseas, his desperate attempt to embroil the English and Scottish Parliaments in a quarrel having broken on the rock of the Covenant, the King was handed over a prisoner to the Commissioners of Parliament, and the first Civil War came to an end.

Coup d'Etat of the New Model

Their common danger in the face of the Royal Armies had kept the Commons united perforce. The removal of their one tie put an end to their union. The end of the war between King and Commons was the opening of a new struggle between Parliament and the Army.

At first a united army confronted a divided and vacillating Parliament. This gave the King his cue. The whole of his mind concentrated upon taking advantage of the division between Independent and Presbyterian—Army and Parliament—until their mutual hostility might permit their common ruin at the hands of a Royalist rising.

At the outset the Royalist aims had been innovating and counter-revolutionary: now they were confined within the narrow conservative compass of "restoration." A corresponding change in the temper of the Presbyterian Parliamentary majority (confronted as it was with a Frankenstein's monster of an Army—which they could not dismiss, and which would not disband) made the division between Royalist-Anglican and Parliamentary-Presbyterian merely theoretical.

The Army had protested, through its Council of Officers, against the terms upon which Parliament proposed to conclude Peace. Parliament's order to disband deprived these officers of their legal standing. The Army replied by appointing two agents (or "adjudicators") for each regiment, and this council of soldiers "deputies" (called, by a happy mispronunciation, "Agitators,") formed, virtually, the revolutionary House of Commons with a Council of Officers as its House of Lords. The Presbyterian majority abandoned even their moderate demands and closed with the King's offer. The army retorted by taking possession of the King, and the revolutionary crisis rose to its culmination.

The Presbyterian Parliamentary majority protested furiously. The Army demanded the impeachment, as traitors, of eleven of this majority (who had secured a vote refusing in advance the demands the Army were formulating). Mobs of London citizens surrounded the House and demanded that it stand firm against the Army. The speaker and the Independent minority took refuge with the Army; who advanced and took possession of London—in order to "free" Parliament from "mob-violence."

The presence of the Army settled the question for the time. The impeached eleven and a majority of their party avoided the House. The Independents rescinded the decisions of the late majority and proceeded to draw up, in consultation with the Army, a new set of demands.

The King, rejoiced at the humiliation of Parliament, and perceiving that the revolutionary boldness of the Army was driving the upper classes further to the "Right," haggled over details and schemed for delay.

The clans of Scotland having failed him, Charles turned to the Lowlands, where the Presbyterian Kirk had been driven into a frenzy by the heresies of the Independents. The Scottish Commissioners entered into a secret treaty with Charles in which he promised in return for military aid to establish the Presbyterian system in England and to suppress the Independent, Baptist, and all other sects. The Scottish Army marched into England, and everywhere Royalist risings anticipated the coming of the Scots.

The feelings of the Army can be imagined. After all their toil and suffering their work was to do all

The History of English Revolutions—THE PURITAN REVOLUTION

over again, and in face of greater odds than ever. For Cromwell and Ireton, who had in their capacity of negotiators taken up an attitude which seemed criminally "moderate," "compromising," and "treacherous" to the ardent Levellers of the Left, this experience of the King's treachery was particularly bitter. They had so far watered down the Army's claims for a political levelling of ranks as to seem mere "Royalists" in the eyes of the ardent republicans. They had never, being "gentleman born," sympathised with Lilburne's demands for a general levelling of ranks, *estates*, and *fortunes*. For the even more extreme advocates of the Communist cultivation of the commons and wastes, they had barely even a show of patience.

It is not surprising that both Cromwell and Ireton had felt their lives in danger during their negotiations with the King. The revelation of his perfidy flung them, and the Moderates, into the arms of the most extreme party of Republicans. The soldiers met to seek the Lord in prayer and came to a swift resolution—first, to fight the enemy; second, "if the Lord brought them back in peace," to "call Charles Stuart, that man of blood, to an account for the blood he had shed and the mischief he had done to his utmost against the Lord's cause and people in these poor nations."

The Presbyterian Reaction

Up to this point the army leaders had striven to reach their end under Parliamentary forms. The Presbyterian reaction was now to drive them still further in a revolutionary direction. As soon as the army was busy in Wales and the North the Presbyterians returned to the House and re-opened negotiations with the King.

Their hatred for the army and its sects was shown by an ordinance for the suppression of blasphemies and heresies; condemning to *death* the holders of certain specified opinions, and imposing the penalty of imprisonment on all who held that Church Government by Presbytery was anti-Christian or unlawful. This would, if enforced, render the majority of the army liable to penalty of death or imprisonment.

Cromwell, on behalf of the army, protested; but the work of war prevented anything beyond a letter of protest.

In the face of their greatest danger—threatened by Royalist and Scottish armies in front, a Royalist mutiny in the Fleet, and a reactionary Parliament behind—the New Model rose to its greatest height. Its discipline, always good, was perfect. Its vigour, always great, was redoubled. Its swiftness and endurance on the march, always noteworthy, became phenomenal. From Kent to Essex; from Hounslow to Wales; from Pembroke to Chester; from Chester to Durham; from Durham across to the Ribble Valley, the army went; and everywhere the opposition was, not merely crushed, but annihilated. The Scots, caught by a swift flanking movement, were driven from Preston to Wigan and then to Warrington; and so, by rout and capture, disposed of. The army was free to deal with both Parliament and King.

The Presbyterians, amazed and furious, strained everything to complete a settlement with the King. He, however, still had hopes. Charles would come to no final agreement—and the advance guard of the army marched into London on the very day set for a Parliamentary vote on the provisional agreement—which was all the Parliamentary Commissioners had been able to gain. For three days more the question was debated (Cromwell arriving in the middle of the debate) and then, after an all-night discussion, the voting showed a majority of 36 for the acceptance of the King's terms.

The majority, it must be remembered, had not only attempted to disband the army (and with wonderful folly, but vivid class-consciousness, simultaneously refused a settlement of its arrears of pay) but had given it every reason to expect pains and penalties at their hands—even should the King, when restored to office, be disposed to spare them. How little reason the army had to expect mercy from the King or his party was shown by the murder (at Pontefract) of one of the leading Levellers—Colonel Rainsborough. The assassination of the army leaders was freely advocated by leading Royalists, and was at a later date practised in many instances.

Pride's Purge

The army, in face of a coalition between the Presbyterian majority and the King and his lords, had no option other than to strike—no choice but to bring Parliament into obedience to them, or to submit to a loss alike of arrears of pay and hopes of liberty—penalties of body and inflictions of mind.

The army chose swiftly. Colonel Pride, the officer commanding the regiment guarding the Parliament House, took his station next morning at the door, with a guard; and placed under arrest

some fifty of the Presbyterian majority. The process was repeated the two mornings following until some fifty were imprisoned for "treason" and some ninety-six excluded.

The Dictatorship of the Army

The Parliament, thus "purged," proceeded to execute the will of the army; to frame a new Constitution; and to bring the King to trial. A revolutionary tribunal was set up, and, within a month of its opening, "the man Charles Stewart" was beheaded on a scaffold erected outside the Banqueting Hall, at Whitehall, as "a man false to his word, a traitor to his trust, and an enemy to the lives and liberties of his people."

Other Kings had met, in England as elsewhere, a violent end by secret assassination after deposition. Charles was solemnly tried, in his capacity of King, for crimes committed in his tenure of office; and, being found guilty, was publicly executed with the pomp and ceremonial usual on such occasions.

The best justification for the Army and their supporters, and, indeed, their final vindication,



Lilburne, the Leveller, aged 23

lies in the fact that their point is conceded by the English Constitutional rule, evolved since their act, that no minister of the Crown can plead the King's command as an excuse for any illegal conduct. This, combined with the practice of allowing the King to do nothing except through ministers, brings the Crown beneath the law, instead of remaining above it.

It was to reach that end that the Army laboured; and the fall of Charles Stuart's head verified their words by the incontestable logic of a deed accomplished.

With the execution of Charles Stuart, and the formal abolition of the office of King and the House of Lords alike, the Puritan Revolution enters upon its conservation.

Till then its aims had been destructive—first of the claims of the Monarchy; then of the power of its allies; finally, of the machinery of its rule. From now on, it becomes constructive. The ground being cleared and the old State machinery smashed, a new apparatus had to be elaborated; and for ten years and more the history of England becomes that of a dictatorship of the Army and its chief Oliver Cromwell.

The Communist Insurrection

Before this process became completed—at the outset of the period of constitution-framing by the Commonwealth's Council of State—it was necessary to dispose of the armed forces still remaining to the House of Stuart. There was Presbyterian Scotland, alienated by the sectarianism of the English Independents. More dangerous still, there was Ireland. To Ireland, accordingly, Cromwell was ordered a few months after the execution of the King.

The order to march for Ireland found the Army in a ferment of expectation. Their programme had been in part realised. England was a Republic. The Chief Malignant had surrendered his life as an atonement for the innocent blood he had caused to be shed. The House of Lords was contemptuously swept aside as "useless" and there was nothing to fear from the prelatical persecution of the "saints."

None the less, this realised only the negative side of their ambitions. The Constitution had yet to be framed. The relief of political tension had made economic anomalies only more glaring.

John Lilburne poured out a stream of pamphlets denouncing the only too patent determination of the "Rump" to cling to office and the emoluments thereof. Everard and Winstanley, with a small group, set about the planting of waste land in Surrey with "roots and beans" (inviting all who would to come and join them in ploughing, digging, and enjoying "in community" the fruits of the earth). They prophesied with much fervour that the time was at hand when all men would willingly come in and, giving up their lands and estates, enjoy this community of goods.

Others, less ideally optimist, sent petition after petition to Parliament demanding annual parliaments, rotation of members of Parliament and of holders of State offices, exclusion of officers from Parliament, limitation of the duration of officers' commissions, abolition of the High Court of Justice and of the Council of State, government by Parliamentary Committee, reform of legal procedure, codification of law, reduction of lawyers and their fees, abolition of tithes, limitation of incomes of clergy, maintenance of clergy by a rate on their parishioners, abolition of all indirect taxation, confiscation of all lands belonging to "delinquent" royalists and the sale of the same for the benefit of the needy supporters of the Revolution, limitation of incomes and of estates—in short, the fermenting agitations, exhortations, enthusiasms and excitements of the Revolution had brought to birth the whole crop of ideas, plans, programmes, and ideologies which have, since that date, provided the stock-in-trade of Radical Reformers, Chartists, Social Democrats and Utopian Communists.

Fierce grew the excitement. A series of mutinies compelled prompt action. Many regiments refused to march for Ireland without some, at any rate, of these Communist concessions. Enough, however, of the Army remained under control to enable the mutinies to be suppressed and the ringleaders shot. Even then discipline was only restored by Cromwell's assertion of sympathy with, at any rate, the purely political demands of the Levellers.

Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector

The changes in the economic importance of the various classes which war circumstances had promoted, brought their inevitable reflections in the development of opinion alike within the Army, the "Rump" (of Parliament) and the Council of State.

At the moment of the King's execution the Army was, as we have seen, predominantly petit bourgeois and proletarian in its composition. Its Republican concepts ranged from Elective-Monarchism through all shades of Theocratic-Democracy to the Levelling Radicalism and Agrarian Communism of the Ultra Left.

The petit bourgeois—as Levellers—fought for cheap government, law reform, relief for debtors, abolition of tithes, and democratisation of the government machinery.

The Big Bourgeoisie (with whom were now allied the defeated Royalist land-owners) opposed them staunchly on every ground; being aided therein by the clericals and ecclesiastics.

The proletarian mass (separated into incompatible fragments by the division of interest between town and country) oscillated between the extremes of Petit Bourgeois Levelling and the Moderate Republicanism of the merchant Capitalists.

The pauperised mass, rendered abject or desperate by the suspension of all ordinary channels of charity, and of the Poor Law, oscillated over a still wider range—from the extremes of Agrarian Communism to those of Royalist Absolutism.

Two opposite tendencies were operating: one towards a monarchial authority suitable to the new aristocracy of wealth—the other towards a democratic-federal republic of handicraft and peasant producers.

Each tendency, needing for its victory a co-operation of classes, was a complex in unstable equilibrium; and, in the circumstances, only one Government was possible—a *military dictatorship*. This, by securing peace, would allow the passions of the revolution to be dissipated by the processes of economic development.

This dictatorship, moreover, from beginning as that of the Army united as a conscious revolutionary political force was, under the influence of this development, bound to change—at first into an oligarchy of the officers, and finally into a dictatorship of the General: should one be available of the necessary personal qualities. The gradual passage from the army to civil life of the yeoman and merchant, and his replacement by the proletarian professional soldier facilitated, even if it did not necessitate, this transformation; and thus the Commonwealth passed into the Dictatorship of Lord General Cromwell.

The Chartist Rising, 1839

By R. W. POSTGATE

JOHN FROST was a draper of good standing in Newport, Monmouth. He had been active in the Reform movement of 1832, and had gained a reputation for humanity as well as ability. He had saved two noblemen, Somerset and Beaufort, from a probably well-deserved thrashing by the crowd at the Monmouth election of 1831. His capability and influence over the general people of the district was recognised some time after the victory of the Reform Bill by his election as Mayor of Newport and later nomination as a J.P. It would have been well for him if he had done as so many others did after the Reform Bill: take the honours given him and forget that "the people" had not been enfranchised, but only a section of the middle-class. He was too conscientious and methodical a man to do that. The same virtues of punctuality, order and method that made him so successful a retailer forbade him to accept this shoddy article for the real enfranchisement of the people that he desired. He had not, so far as we know, any further ambitions than that. "There was never," he said at his trial, "any talk of a distribution of property other than what exists." For him the Charter, of which he became an adherent, carried no more meaning than was written in its terms. Universal Male Suffrage, Annual Parliaments, Secret Ballot, Payment of Members—these he desired because he believed, with all the rest of England, that they would bring real freedom to the working masses of Great Britain.

His advocacy of these principles secured him great affection and trust in Monmouthshire. The barren hills and moors of the county had been only recently broken and tunnelled into by a new population who had been crowded into the region by the coal-owners. No unions, no modern appliances or Acts safeguarded lives or limited the hours of the colliers. Death and disease took an unchecked harvest of the men, women and children, who all alike had to work down in the mine depths. Great suffering, much degradation and discontent resulted among the 40,000 workers who inhabited a countryside where 50 years before there had been barely 40 shepherd's huts. "Ignorance," lamented the learned Attorney General, "prevails there to an extent very much to be deplored, and many of the people who live in this district are subject to be practised upon by designing men."

"Designing men" were not lacking. In the year 1839 the Chartist movement was growing in strength and not seriously disunited. A Convention of Chartist delegates met at the beginning of the year to direct a campaign to culminate, it was hoped, as the campaign of 1832 had done, in terrifying the authorities into passing a new Reform Bill. Discussion and dissension over methods was considerable, but it was agreed for the while to let the "moral force" Chartists, as they were called, try their methods out. A petition with a million and a quarter signatures—an unheard of number—was presented to the House of Commons. At the same time a programme for a month's general strike was adopted.

In July the petition was rejected. The Convention then fixed a date for the general strike, but realising that its power to carry it through was very doubtful, called it off again. The whole movement seemed to have ended in collapse.

* * *

The matter was not allowed to stay there. The "moral force" men had led them to disaster: there were others, the "physical force" men who would take things over. Frost of Wales, Taylor of Birmingham, Bussey of Yorkshire, and some others, met after the Convention had risen and made arrangements for an armed rising. Sheffield, Birmingham, Cardiff and Newport, and the cotton districts of Lancashire, were held to be ready to rise. Bussey was in charge of Yorkshire and failed to do anything. Of the other districts we know little, except of Wales. The Crown alleged afterwards that the Monmouth men were to give the signal for a general rising by blowing up the Newport bridge over the Usk. This would prevent the mail leaving for Birmingham, and its non-arrival there within an hour and a half of the usual time would be the signal for a rising. "There was to be a general rising through Lancashire and throughout the Kingdom and Charter law universally established." That this was the exact plan seems doubtful: the Newport mail joined the Birmingham mails at Bristol, and whether or no the Newport mail was held up the mail coach would arrive in Birmingham at the usual time, carrying the Bristol letters. But it seems sure that there was some connection between Wales, Birmingham, and the North, and that the capture

of Newport was to be the sign for a general insurrection.

* * *

Frost returned to Newport in the autumn. He had for assistance Zephaniah Williams, an inn-keeper, and William Jones, a watchmaker. Things were going wrong in the North, Bussey was letting them down, but the message to this effect, which was to have been sent through the great leader Feargus O'Connor, never arrived in Newport, and Frost proceeded with his preparations until the end of October. Then they fixed on the night of November 3rd as "the day." On that date they would enter Newport at two in the morning and seize the town before the garrison was capable of resistance. This would give the signal for the English revolt: for themselves they would proceed to Monmouth to free their beloved Chartist orator, Henry Vincent, lying there in prison.

* * *

On the night of the third of November, the Chartist army was on the move. They were in three divisions, composed, of course, almost exclusively of miners. The first column, under John Frost, consisted of the Lodges of the extreme West of Monmouthshire. It was to assemble at a place called Blackwood, near the Rhymney, and cut across country to Abercarn and down to Risca, which is some four miles from Newport. Here it

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would meet the two other columns—Zephaniah Williams', which was to come down country twenty miles at least, from Nantyglo in the north, and William Jones', which had merely to come from Pontypool, a journey no farther than Frost himself had to make.

Frost, in the afternoon and evening of November 3rd, fixed his headquarters duly at Blackwood, in a public-house. The Chartists' arrangements, which are secret to this day, must have been fairly effective, for several thousands fell in. They were armed, for the most part, with home-made pikes and spears, but a fair number had guns and pistols, with ammunition, while others brought "an instrument called a mandril, which is made of iron and used for picking coals in the mines, resembling a pickaxe in shape, a very dangerous and deadly weapon if used as a weapon of offence." They had been drilled a little but not enough, for though they started off bravely enough in rank they had not gone far before the main body dissolved into a general mass walking along as easily and casually as any peaceful procession. More disorganisation was caused by their impressing all the miners who were unfortunate enough to live on the line of march. Their numbers were increased by this, but their morale was ruined by the presence of so many who were only anxious to run at the first opportunity.

When they got up on the hill-side on their way to Abercarn, they were met by the most terrific storm. The rain and wind that swept over the Welsh moors can be terrible enough under ordinary circumstances, but this was "the darkest and most tempestuous night known for many years." The night was pitch black, neither moon nor stars could be seen, and they had to guess their way over the rough roads. Up on the heights they were helplessly exposed to the wind which raged with appalling violence, howling like a living thing. The rain descended in sheets, soaking them through and through. Time and again they had to stop to clean and dry their muskets. They were more than a little cold, damp and discouraged when they descended into Risca to meet the other columns.

No one was there. They took shelter as best they could, in doorways or public-houses, and waited.

They must have waited nearly four hours, for day was breaking before they decided not to wait any more, but to go forward and capture Newport themselves. They formed some sort of order again and moved on down the road to Newport.

Only ten minutes later Zephaniah Williams' column entered the empty town of Risca. It followed Frost down to Newport—ten minutes behind all the way. Jones had only reached Malpas.

* * *

Frost's men, after halting twice again to look to their muskets, approached the outskirts of Newport, passing by the length of Tredegar Park, and past Court-y-Bella. One of the songs they were singing has been preserved:

I have seen the poplars flourish fast
While the humble briars bound them,
I have seen them torn up by the blast
Of elements around them.
The lightning flashes through the sky,
The thunder loud roars after,
O scorch, burn the oppressors! Why?
Because they withhold the Charter.
Then rise, my boys, and fight the foe,
Your arms are truth and reason,
We'll let the Whigs and Tories know
That Union is not treason.
Ye lords, oppose us if you can,
Your own doom you seek after,
With or without you we will stand,
Until we gain the Charter.

* * *

Inside Newport the authorities had got wind of what was on. They had rounded up a number of Chartists and put them under guard in the Westgate Hotel. A number of special constables and a small detachment of soldiers were also put in to guard the Hotel, though it seems that Frost knew nothing of the presence of the soldiers. Anyway, when his irregular army, some four thousand strong, marched down Stow Hill and wheeled round to the front of the Westgate Hotel, they behaved as though they suspected nothing. The windows were shuttered and barred, and nothing was to be seen but a few special constables, who fled inside, after replying "No, never!" to a demand that they surrender the prisoners. The Chartists were firing aimlessly into the air, doing no injury if creating alarm. They attempted to follow up the special constables through the front door. Just as they were pressing through, the shutters of the windows on the ground floor were thrown open, exposing the soldiers who had been hidden up till then. The military instantly fired a volley into the mass of the crowd. They were in a commanding position: the Chartists were packed into an open square beneath them. Every shot told, there was no possibility of escape: the miners were caught like rats in a trap. The soldiers swore they only fired one volley (and the defence at the trial had good reason for not questioning that) but the ten dead and over 50 wounded prove this to be wrong.

As soon as they could, the outmanoeuvred miners scattered and broke, running down every turning. Those who were trying to storm the front door and had actually broken in to the passage, resisted and fought for some while longer. They attempted to rush the room in which the soldiers were several times, but always "faltered when they encountered their own dead." The firing, all told, lasted ten minutes, and by then the passage and street were clear of all but the dead and wounded. Among the dead was a boy of 18 who had sent this letter the night before:—

Dear Parents,

I hope this will find you well as I am myself at this present. I shall this night be engaged in a glorious struggle for freedom, and should it please God to spare my life I shall see you soon; but if not, grieve not for me. I shall have fallen in a noble cause. Farewell!

Yours truly,

GEORGE SHELL.

* * *

As the flying miners went back along the road they ran into Williams' column still leisurely advancing. Williams' men hesitated for a moment and then joined in the rout. Jones' column heard of the defeat by message and turned home.

The last seen of Frost that day was when he was walking with jerky steps among the mob past the walls of Tredegar Park, "holding his handkerchief to his face, as if he was weeping."

EDINBURGH. Free Holiday Scheme declared illegal. No communication dealt with after 1st July. Return books and subscriptions to D. Irvine, 159, Leith Street, Edinburgh.

OURSELVES AND THE LABOUR PARTY

By A. MACMANUS, Chairman of the Communist Party

ON the 27th of June, the Twenty-Second Annual Conference of the Labour Party will meet at Edinburgh, and the question of the affiliation of the Communist Party will come up for decision.

We gave in a previous article a full account of the negotiations and a copy of the Questionnaire and the answers thereto. This week, in a final communication, we take occasion to again remind the E.C. of the Labour Party that the four questions embody only the *differences* between us. They take no notice of the points of agreement.

This fact, whatever its influence upon the Executive, should at least weigh with the delegates, as the justification or otherwise for our exclusion depends upon how much importance is attached to the differences revealed in these questions and answers.

I urge this because I am convinced that the decision is much more likely to depend upon a supposition of the amount of harm our inclusion might do to a number of Labour Party Candidates at a General Election, than upon any theoretical differences. Altogether apart from the question of whether our inclusion would have this result—surely the ultimate welfare of the workers is much more important than the expediency of a General Election. The present Prime Minister adopted just such an expedient at the last election. None were more critical of the folly of subordinating ultimate well-being to momentary advantage, than were the present leaders of the Labour Party. How much more disastrous then is such a tactic to a body like the Labour Party, which has a permanent function to perform?

What do we mean by this? Nothing more or less than this—The Labour Party contains within itself organic potentialities which are bound to be of functional value to the future political state of the working class. But—and it is a very big “but”—it also contains with these elements, others with tendencies entirely opposite.

And these latter constitute the dominating factor within the Labour Party.

Let us examine the situation a moment. The two essential facts determining the policy of the Labour Party are the *trade unions* within its ranks and the political interest of the *political groups* also included.

The first are such a confused and detached quantity that it is next to impossible for them to assert any political will. True agendas and annual conferences allow for expression. But a moment's glance at any agenda will reveal what I mean. One finds, not the essence of working-class feeling from the millions organised in those trade unions but a whole series of items the securing of which will afford scope and facility for the talents in general administration of the leaders.

It is just here that the danger arises.

The fact that only at annual conferences can the trade union section make itself heard and then only in complicated whispers, means that the day-to-day policy of the Party is determined by some other influence.

What is that other influence?

It is the influence of the political groups! When particular trade unions concerned find themselves involved, then, and only then, do they turn their attention to the Labour Party. Consequently when policies are to be discussed, the political group (which arrives with its ideas trimmed and its purpose clear) naturally wins the day.

A study of the policy of the Labour Party in any of the disputes of the past will reveal the extent to which this operates. The moment a dispute gets to breaking point, a two-fold policy is adopted. Constitutional negotiations and mediation, supplemented by a publicity campaign aimed at the appeasement of “the public.”

Members of the Fabian Society, in a spirit of magnanimous self-sacrifice, volunteer to supervise and conduct this publicity.

Is it all magnanimity? Assuredly not! The real impulse—not consciously divined but born of deep-rooted impulses—is to ensure (by calculated representations) that the directions will be along “safe lines.” That is, nothing “rash”—nothing to dislocate the machinery of the State. Nothing distasteful to petit-bourgeois and professional interests.

The Fabian Society is wholly bourgeois in its outlook. It is just radical enough to attend to those middle-class and pro-

fessional interests which are ridden over rough shod by aggressive Bourgeois Imperialism. These interests find a convenient means of protection and defence ready made in the machinery of the Labour Movement. Hence the zeal with which the Fabian Society voices its love for progressive Constitutionalism. Hence its determined stand against even a hint of tactics which might tend to dislocate the machinery of State.

The frantic endeavour of Sydney Webb recently to legalise the Poplar situation constitutes but one instance of this. The action of two other members in contesting seats in the recent L.C.C. elections at the expense of the official Labour Party Candidates adds still further proof.

Was not Sydney Webb the outstanding member of the E.C. opposed entirely to the main resolutions adopted at the now famous Central Hall Conference? Even though middle-class opinion was at that time against war with Russia.

But for once the will of the trade unions within the Party proved irresistible!

In the Fabian Society and Sidney Webb and the middle-class they represent is one influence determining the policy of the Labour Party.

What of the other political group, the I.L.P.?

Once again we observe the same process in operation; except that in the I.L.P. there exists a strong leaven of proletarian opinion—a tendency in continual conflict with the semi-bourgeois influence. The importance given in its programme to Pacificism—its passionate desire to vie with Radical and Fabian colleagues in capacity for State Administration—each gives evidence of the ascendancy of the middle-class.

It is obvious what influences determine the policy of the Labour Party. And it is not too surprising to find the chief opposition to the affiliation of the Communist Party comes from these two camps.

These camps understand well that the inclusion of the Communist Party would mean the introduction for the first time of an essentially proletarian influence. Those who wish the Labour Party to retain its proletarian character would do well to ponder these things before assisting in our rejection.

Consider how it will operate in the event of the E.C. amendments being carried. It will then be impossible for any member of the Communist Party to represent his or her trade union branch on either the local or national Labour Party. My branch of the A.E.U., for instance, is asked by Sydney Webb to agree that *he* is better fitted to represent its politics than myself.

Very carefully thought out, Mr. Webb. But will it work? I wonder?

I know it will be argued that these amendments were framed not to combat Communists, but to cope with Unionist Labour Groups and Conservative Working Men's Clubs, etc. *But if so why this undue tardiness?* Are not these bodies much less powerful than at any previous period? Ask any of the local Labour Groups.

Try again, Mr. Webb; and next time be just a little more subtle.

To the general body of the delegates we have just this to say: Think well over these points. Study the utterances of the outstanding spokesmen. Find out the extent to which they are saturated with this semi-bourgeois feeling. Remember when you read that Mr. J. H. Thomas says that under no circumstances he is prepared to yield up the weapon of the strike, that he is then only responding to the determined resolve of the mass of working men and women in the country. When he states in the next breath that he is only prepared to resort to its use when everything else has failed, remember that in this he proves how well this semi-bourgeois influence has done its work upon him.

The issue involved in our application for affiliation is not a simple difference of tactics. It is the struggle of middle class opinion to prevent a challenging voice entering to question its mastery.

Whatever the result, the Communist Party will carry on its work, convinced that time and circumstances will reveal that in it the working-class has always a steadfast, loyal and fearless champion. And that its exclusion from its legitimate place within the ranks of the organised Labour Movement would be a tragic mistake.

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MEETINGS, Etc.

Communist Party Branches

ABERGWYNFLI, Cymmer, Cwmavon and Garw Valley sympathisers are asked to communicate with W. T. Williams, 8, Hill Street, Nantyffyllon, nr. Bridgend. Send a card now!

CROYDON. Sunday (25th inst.), 8 p.m., Katherine Street (outside Town Hall), Comrade Casey (Tooting).

EDINBURGH. Sunday (25th inst.), 2.30 p.m., East Meadows; 6.30 p.m., Brunswick Street. Speaker: A. Auld (Glasgow).

KINGSTON. Sunday (25th inst.), 7.30 p.m., Market Place. E. Millar (Croydon).

ERITH. Every Friday, 7.30 p.m., Open-air meetings Co-op. Corner. Every Friday, 2.30 p.m., Christ Church Organised Unemployed meetings.

MANCHESTER. Sunday (25th inst.), 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m., Stevenson Square. Mrs. Walker (Liverpool). Roll up in thousands!

DUNDEE. Sunday Propaganda Meetings, Albert Square, 2.30 and 6.30 p.m. Prominent speakers. Questions and discussion.

CROYDON I.W.C.E. (Summer Course). Mark Starr commences series of six Lectures on “Imperialism,” Thursday, June 22nd, 7.30 p.m., at Ruskin House. All workers welcome