

SOCIALISM AND THE MYTH OF THE GOLDEN PAST

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I

THE belief has been widely and successfully fostered in recent years that socialism in the countries of advanced capitalism has gone into a steep and probably irreversible decline, and that the general *embourgeoisement* of capitalist societies has all but destroyed its appeal in those countries. There might still be some support, it is conceded, for a modern, reasonable, up-to-date, attenuated version of socialism; but anything more than this is doomed to hopeless failure and certain electoral disaster. Western social-democratic parties have mostly accepted some such view, and have found in it a further justification for their already well-developed propensity to define socialism as capitalism, only better. But there are also many socialists who reject that definition, yet who have come to accept the notion of socialist decline, of the past as militant and committed, and the present as unregenerate. The purpose of this essay is to question this reading of socialist history.

Socialist decline in these highly industrialized countries presumably means that at some particular point of time, at some point of the historical curve, socialist prospects were better, more hopeful, in the sense that there were then more socialists about, **or, if** there were not more of them, that socialists were then at least of better, higher quality, more clear-minded, or class-conscious, or committed; also, that there was, at some stage in the past, more popular support for socialists in the working classes, among the young, among intellectuals, and that, from this high point, there has been a perceptible, not to say a catastrophic, reduction in that support, so that socialism in the West, save in its loosest sense, is at a greater discount with every passing year. Nor, it is generally added, is this in the least surprising, given the difference in conditions of life between the poverty-stricken past and the relatively affluent present.

This view of the past is now pretty well taken for granted. One would therefore expect the evidence for it to be blindingly obvious, or at least very easily obtainable. But it is not. In fact, the evidence points mostly the other way.

The period most obviously relevant, from a socialist point of view, to a comparison between the past and the present is the inter-war years, and this is also the period most favoured as providing an illustration of the thesis of socialist decline. However, it may be useful to consider

first the more remote past, whose socialist virtues, as compared to the present, have also found nostalgic supporters. For this purpose, two separate periods may be distinguished, the **pre-1870s**, and the three decades or so before 1914.

II

The period which encompassed the prolonged process which Edward Thompson has called the **making** of the English working class is extraordinarily rich in ideas and movements, culminating in Chartism, the first authentic working-class mass movement in history. The vision and dedication which are part of those years command admiration and even reverence. But it is no disparagement of these pioneer endeavours to note the incoherence and divisions, the fragility of organization and the confusion of aims, which are also part of their history. The remarkable thing is how much was achieved in the face of **crushing** odds, and at a time when capitalism had only begun to flex its industrial muscles. However, admiration for these achievements should not be allowed to blur the fact that the established order of which capitalism had become a part found it discouragingly easy, despite its limited means, to repel the popular challenge against it. The notion of **skipping** a capitalist phase of development became meaningful later, in other countries and in **different** conditions. But there never was the remotest chance, notwithstanding the fears expressed by some nervous contemporaries, of the capitalist **phase** being skipped, or dramatically foreshortened, in the countries of its birth. There at least, **Marx's** famous pronouncement of 1859 was justified, namely that "no social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed."

The same record of achievements and also of weaknesses is even more clearly true of France; its socialist movement in the first half of the nineteenth century contributed much to the heroic image of socialism; but the French movement, unlike its English counterpart, was never able to mobilize large masses of people. 1848 is a great date in the socialist calendar, but it is only by the exercise of a romantic historical imagination that it is possible to see it as a vast movement of socialist insurrection. Nor can the extraordinary heroism and bitter splendour of another such episode, the Paris Commune, erase its marked confusions and uncertainties and, even more important, its isolation from the rest of France.

By the end of this first period, some basic institutions of the working-class movement, notably trade unions, had come into being; but they were weak organizations, barely national in character, and circumscribed in their activities by severe legal limitations as well as by fierce hostility. They often displayed a high degree of class-consciousness and there was an admirable spirit of internationalism to be found among their members, but of course they included no more than a

fraction of wage-earners. Socialist theory was still in the process of formation, and ideological divisions between the sects were deep and bitter. The socialist and labour press was everywhere small and precarious, and socialist books were uncommon. Finally, in those few countries where it had assumed a distinct identity, the working class was excluded from the political process altogether; even so, its influence in a variety of respects was considerable, but, in direct political terms, it had to find expression through well-disposed intermediaries, since working-class movements had not then been able to create their own political instruments.

In a different though related context, any assessment of socialist fortunes at any given historical point must take into account the relation of intellectuals (mostly not of the working class) to labour and socialist movements. In this first phase, middle-class socialist intellectuals were oddities, almost freaks. Intellectuals in Britain, France or Germany were divided among themselves by innumerable ideological and political differences; but these differences melted away in a common opposition to socialist ideas. For the overwhelming majority of them, the established order, in its fundamental features if not in its every detail, seemed part of the natural and immutable order of things, and those who hated it mostly looked back, with consciously ineffectual nostalgia, to a pre-capitalist society, not to a post-capitalist one.

Compared to the pre-1870s, the three decades or so before the outbreak of World War I witnessed an enormous increase in the strength and influence of labour and socialist movements in Western Europe, and even in the United States. This in fact is the period in which an organized Labour movement really came into being, in which working-class parties were founded, with a distinct socialist ideology and programme. Also, these parties made great strides in electoral and political terms, most notably in Germany and France, to the point of forming, in these countries, the main opposition within their respective parliaments.

These pre-war decades also witnessed a major growth of trade unionism, much of it extremely militant and ideologically committed. Moreover, both the trade unions and the political movements now acquired their own press, and the means of disseminating socialist ideas on an entirely new scale. From being a band of zealots, socialists became an army; and the army was joined, in very substantial numbers, by intellectuals in search of new political homes. It is in this period that it becomes possible to speak meaningfully of a European socialist intelligentsia deeply involved in concrete political movements and events. For the first time since the Enlightenment, vast numbers of intellectuals from different countries found common ground, and a common allegiance, however much they might differ about points of doctrine, strategy and tactics.

Furthermore, these movements appeared deeply penetrated by the

spirit of internationalism, of socialism-beyond-frontiers, which found expression in a new International, much larger and stronger than the first, and one of whose main concerns was to proclaim working-class international solidarity against bourgeois national competition and imperialist rivalry.

No one, looking at this picture, could fail to deny progress. But a closer look suggests very substantial qualifications.

Thus, progress in numbers, while real, still left organized labour a minority of wage-earners, and political Labour a minority party—in Britain more a pressure group in the House of Commons than a political party. A large part of the working classes, most workers on the land, the bulk of the lower middle class and much the larger part of the intelligentsia still gave more or less active support to a variety of resolutely anti-socialist parties and causes.

Secondly, it was in this period that there occurred a fundamental division within the Labour movement between those who mainly saw it as an interest, and those who believed it embodied a cause, between those whose almost exclusive concern was the immediate needs, demands and grievances of Labour, and those for whom this was only part of the movement's purpose. The two perspectives are not necessarily incompatible; but in practice, the gulf between them was very deep, long before the split between Social-Democracy and Communism tore the Labour movements apart. Everywhere too, except for Britain, there were other splits, on ethnic and religious grounds, which a common allegiance to the workers' cause was quite insufficient to breach.

Moreover, the new mass organizations, industrial as well as political had, almost from their inception, fallen victim to the bureaucratic curse: Robert Michels was a disillusioned socialist and the main frame of reference for his "iron law of oligarchy" was the experience of the West European Socialist and Labour organizations. Not only were these organizations top-heavy; they were also riddled with energetic climbers, more concerned with place than with purpose. The Labour movements were now well implanted in their societies, and room was found for many of their leaders—at a price—in the conventional scheme of politics. By 1914, they had, everywhere, become agents of piecemeal pressure and reform, fulfilling a crucial role as brokers and intermediaries between the rulers of their countries and their own followers and members, advancing the workers' claims, but also discharging a function essential to capitalist society—that of disciplining and moderating those claims. By then, most Labour leaders had acquired a large stake in moderate reform within capitalism, and a deep fear of militant action.

As for the internationalism of the period, it is worth noting that it was almost wholly concerned with the developed capitalist white world, to whom the rest of the world served as a coloured backcloth; and that, outside the socialist ranks, this was a period of strong popular support

for imperialist ventures and conquests—indeed, support for imperialism is also to be found, with suitable white-man-burden connotations, within the socialist ranks as well. What later came to be known as anti-colonialism was certainly not one of the prominent features of the Labour movements of the time. The more recent record on colonialism of the Western Labour movement is not particularly creditable. But let there at least be no illusion about the intensity of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism in earlier days—save for a small minority which certainly did not grow smaller with the years.

The leaders of the International, in the years before 1914, certainly denounced war with vehement sincerity, and equally sincere was their determination to prevent its occurrence. But the final reckoning of the character of the period, from a socialist point of view, is bound to take note of the rapidity with which socialist internationalism faded when submitted to the test of war, not least among those who had been most loud in their proclamations of that internationalism; and perhaps even more noteworthy is the support which leaders and led alike, save for small minorities, continued to give to their respective military and political élites through four years of mass slaughter.

III

Despite all the claims which are made for the inter-war years, and particularly for the "red 'thirties," this third period exhibits to an even more marked degree the same combination of positive and negative features as the previous ones. There were, in those years, socialist advances of a very definite kind. But the negative features, often embedded in some of the advances themselves, are equally marked; victory and defeat, advance and regression, are tightly intertwined.

By far the most important event of the period was of course the survival of the Bolshevik Revolution: there is no question of the massive impulse, the tremendous heave which that survival afforded to socialist movements everywhere. But the second most important event of the period was the absence of revolution anywhere else, particularly in Germany. Its survival in isolation had a tremendous impact upon the character of the Russian Revolution; but the character which this surviving revolution assumed was in turn of immense importance for the Western Labour movements.

One aspect of this relationship was the deepening and the formal institutionalization of the split between Communists and Social-Democrats, which left hardly any room for any grouping in between. Another, in countries like Britain, was the isolation of some of the most militant elements in the Labour movements. Yet another such consequence was the image stamped upon socialism by its consolidation in a country so profoundly backward as Russia. Inevitably, that image was bound to be one of grinding want, soon supplemented by repression.

Nor, once "socialism in one country" has become an acknowledged fact, and part of a situation that gave no sign of being dramatically altered for a long time to come, were the Bolshevik leaders or their followers in the West willing to acknowledge that this version of socialism was only the product of Russian backwardness and Western default. On the contrary, and this was one of the most marked features of the whole Stalinist era, they came to insist upon the universal validity of the Soviet experiment, and to see all socialist activity in terms of their own reading of the particular requirements and needs of the Soviet régime. Before long, they had come to make the acceptance of a grotesquely roseate view of the Soviet régime and unquestioning adherence to its policies the first criterion of socialist rectitude. Thus were engendered peculiar habits of thought, which did great damage, in some instances catastrophic damage, in and to the Labour movements everywhere.

However, the Labour movements did make great strides forward, in numbers, organization, and influence; and socialism, as theory, as ideology, and as promise, came to be established, in a way it had never been established before, as the main alternative to the ideologies of the existing order.

Yet, these gains need to be seen, not only in relation to earlier periods, but also to the acuteness of capitalist crisis in those years. In *this* perspective, the gains are more notable for their modesty than for their extent. Thus, in Britain for instance, the immediate post-war boom was followed by years of mass unemployment and mass deprivation. But the 'twenties in Britain were by no means militant years. They were years of retreat and resignation. The General Strike of 1926 was a remarkable event; but it was altogether unplanned, and it was certainly unwanted by the Labour leaders. Its aims were exceedingly limited; and when the Labour leaders made their unconditional surrender, there was much bitterness among the rank and file, but no rebellion. Politically, the 'twenties managed to produce two weak, ineffectual minority Labour governments; but even the most ardent apologists of these governments have spent more time in finding excuses for their failings than in extolling their achievements. Nor were socialist achievements much more spectacular anywhere else in the world of advanced capitalism.

What, then, of the 'thirties? According to well-polished legend, this was the true era of socialist commitment, the high peak of socialist conversion. There is no question that it *should* have been. For after all, the Great Depression appeared to provide conclusive evidence that those who had spoken of the inevitable collapse of capitalism were right, now that its failure and irrationality were so sharply exposed. But in actual fact, the 'thirties have a high claim to be considered as the most terrible period of defeat in this century for the international Socialist and Labour movements.

The worst defeat was of course the Nazis' capture of Germany. In that country, economic crisis, far from giving a decisive advantage to the forces of the left, gave the Nazis their chance. There were many factors which weakened the German Labour movement and which eased the Nazi path, most notably the irreconcilable divisions in the socialist camp. But history is not affected by excuses. The fact of defeat remains, and it is again part of a realistic assessment of the period to note the relative ease with which the Nazis were able to crush and destroy a divided and demoralized Labour movement, and thus to repeat on a more dramatic scale the experience of the Italian Labour movement in the face of Mussolini's Fascism. Also, the rapidity with which support for the parties of the left evaporated must be remembered when the depth of socialist commitment in pre-Nazi days is gauged.

In Britain the catastrophic end of the second Labour Government in 1931 only produced a Conservative-dominated "National" Government, backed by a Conservative parliamentary majority larger than any in British parliamentary history: the General Election of 1931 gave the Conservatives 471 out of 615 seats; Government supporters from all parties won 556 seats. The circumstances were no doubt exceptional, but four years later, bitter years of mass unemployment and the Means Test, a General Election still gave the Conservatives and their allies a majority of well over two hundred seats. Because of the peculiarities of the British electoral system, these figures, of course, exaggerate the degree of popular support for the Conservatives. Even so, they did very much better than Labour in the popular poll as well.

Mr. C. A. R. Crosland wrote some years ago that "we shall never, thank goodness, recapture the bitter, militant Clan of pre-war days—that was a product of Hunger Marches, Distressed Areas, and two million unemployed" (Encounter, October 1960). The Clan is in fact the product of Mr. Crosland's imagination. At no time during the 'thirties did either the trade unions or the Labour Party react with any vigour to the blatant sins of omission and of commission of successive Conservative Governments. Indeed, they made it their business to oppose any kind of militant Clan, to the point of opposing the Hunger Marches—not, it should be added, that the Hunger Marches were ever as well supplied with marchers as legend would now have it: there have been many more feet to march in the supposedly uncommitted 'fifties.

As for the Communist Party, its membership was less than 3,000 at the height of the Depression, and it only began its dizzy climb beyond the 10,000 mark after the worst of the slump was well over. Nor did the Independent Labour Party do any better. On the contrary, it went into an irreversible decline in the 'thirties. As for the Labour Left in the trade unions and the Labour Party, it found the task of conversion even more difficult than it has done subsequently. The notion that it had then a ready audience for militancy, socialism or anything else is not born out by the evidence.

There did exist in the 'thirties a small but very militant minority, ideologically committed to Marxism, or some variant of it. Its impact was out of all proportion to its actual numbers; and that impact was all the greater because this minority included a number of highly articulate and often gifted people. Nevertheless, it is only in the world of historical make-believe that most British intellectuals and academics were then on the left, or that Cambridge University went off *en masse* to fight for Republican Spain. The reality was altogether different. The 'thirties in Britain, save for very active pockets of intellectual, political and industrial dissent and militancy, were years of middle-class complacency and working-class apathy and resignation, with more "deference" support for the Conservatives among the working classes than they have ever enjoyed in later years.

In the United States, the country most dramatically hit by the Great Depression, the 'thirties did witness the flowering of a new radicalism, which undoubtedly made a deep and lasting impact on many areas of American life. As in Britain, so in New Deal America, socialist ideas, including Marxism in one form or another, gained a wider currency than ever before, notably among intellectuals and academics. It was also a time when trade unionism made spectacular gains and organized labour acquired the status of a serious pressure group. But the radicalism of the 'thirties stopped far short of ever becoming an autonomous political movement, capable of forcing its own programme on the American political agenda. The feuding socialist groups never achieved any degree of popular support; instead, organized labour found junior partnership with the New Deal quite acceptable, and it also found acceptable the New Deal's explicit aim (pursued with greater zeal than any other) of putting capitalism back on its feet.

In France, the undoubted labour and socialist advances of the inter-war years seemed to find their culmination in the Popular Front and the Government of **Léon Blum**. But the militant mood of its working-class supporters appeared to frighten the Government as much as it frightened the Government's bourgeois enemies. Its achievements were correspondingly meagre and its derelictions, from a socialist point of view, many. Its demise was as inglorious as had been its life. With it, there died one of the last hopes of effective opposition to the appeasement of Fascism, in France, in Spain and in Europe.

On the subject of Spain, and of appeasement generally, the Western Labour movements cannot reasonably be made to bear a preponderant share of responsibility for the years of betrayal, retreat and surrender. But neither is it proper to ignore how much their own record of indecision, timidity, and confusion contributed to the disastrous character of those years. It is only at the distance of thirty years that the issues of the 'thirties are seen to have been clear-cut and compelling, so that no one had any difficulty in knowing what policies to support and what action to take. At the time, the small, militant minorities did

not, somehow, find it in the least easy to break through the thick, solid, wall of apathy, indifference and hostility.

What is true about the 'thirties is that the committed minorities were much more confident than the equivalent (and probably larger) minorities of the recent past that capitalism was more or less on its last legs, and that socialism was not only round the corner, but that, as proved by Soviet experience, it must soon usher in the reign of sweetness and light, with minor difficulties mostly caused by a handful of enemies of the people. This no doubt gave many socialists a sense of certitude which their successors have found it difficult to share. But since some part, at least, of the socialist confidence of the 'thirties was based on wishful thinking and undemanding faith, the loss of it may be less regrettable than is often suggested. Socialism is not a religious movement. An awareness of its problems as well as of its promise may be a more solid and lasting basis of commitment than a belief in its magic properties as a cure-all.

IV

The most obvious lesson provided by past socialist experience in the countries of advanced capitalism concerns the relationship between economic crisis and socialist commitment—or rather the lack of such relationship. Whatever may be the case in other countries, unemployment, crisis and deprivation in these countries at least have not been the natural allies of militant pressure and socialist commitment. Had deprivation and exploitation been the condition and the catalyst of socialist change, capitalism would have been overthrown long ago or civil war would have been more or less endemic in all the countries of advanced capitalism. For some people, no doubt, poverty, or the knowledge of other people's poverty, does act as a goad and provide the basis of socialist commitment. But this does not seem to be true for really substantial numbers, certainly not for the mass of those most directly affected. Of course, expectations change, and an economic crisis which produced little reaction in one generation might, on being repeated, produce a much greater reaction in the next. The repetition today of the depression of the early 'thirties, in countries like Britain and the United States, would probably have far more dramatic consequences. But it is by no means certain that the consequences would necessarily flow in socialist directions.

In the light of the past, the experience of recent years assumes a rather different character than is usually attributed to it. For despite all assertions to the contrary, these recent years in the countries concerned do not, on any of the criteria used earlier, compare at all unfavourably with preceding periods. This is probably less true for some countries than for others; but the evidence is altogether lacking that the "affluence" of the last decade in these countries has produced

a marked decline in working-class militancy or in socialist commitment, as compared with the unaffluent past.

In any case, poverty and "affluence," taken by themselves, are far too abstract categories to serve as explanations of social behaviour and commitment. Just as the belief that poverty, as such, produces militant reactions is contradicted by the evidence, so the attribution to "affluence" of a soporific social effect is equally doubtful. Poverty, in these Western countries, has not bred militancy or socialism; neither has the alleviation of poverty bred apathy. The one instance which is usually invoked to suggest a direct relation between "affluence" and social apathy is the United States. But this is hardly conclusive. For, quite apart from the fact that millions of Americans lead extremely unaffluent lives, the attribution to "affluence" of the decline of socialist commitment in America conveniently ignores the cluster of political and social factors which account far more plausibly for that decline; not least among them is the deliberately manipulated intensity with which the Cold War has been experienced in the United States, and the fierceness with which the un-American label has been pinned on all serious varieties of American socialism. It also ignores how many Americans, in the face of such pressures, have either publicly refused to conform, or have at least maintained what might be called a socialism of the hearth which would, in changed and more favourable circumstances, assume more public forms.

If one is looking for instances of socialist decline, West Germany would suggest itself as a better example than the United States. But in West Germany too, there are many better explanations for that decline than the "affluence" produced by the German "economic miracle," among them physical destruction of a whole socialist generation, and also the contiguity of the German Democratic Republic, *not* the best advertisement for post-capitalist systems. For the rest, for countries like Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, or Japan, the evidence is altogether lacking that the alleviation of poverty has had any debilitating effect upon their Labour movements or upon socialist commitment. On the contrary, the record suggests that working-class pressure for economic and social betterment is *not* in any way diminished in conditions of "affluence," and can indeed be exercised to greater effect in such conditions.

On the other hand, it is quite true that this pressure involves a struggle within capitalism, rather than a total challenge to it. The distinction is at times blurred, nor does it diminish the importance and the necessity of such pressure. But it would only become a clear attack against capitalism if the system were wholly incapable of meeting some at least of the demands made upon it: advanced capitalism has proved repeatedly that it is not incapable of meeting such limited demands, nor is there much reason to think that it cannot continue to do so, out of its own reserves of strength and resilience. Its response will be

sluggish, half-hearted, inadequate, but concessions will, in these countries, continue to be made to the further pressure of the Labour movements.

This, however, hardly exhausts the problems of capitalism and the challenge of socialism. For—and this is something which Fabian-minded socialists have always found it difficult to understand—socialism is not about the relief of poverty, marginal collectivism, administrative efficiency, and social reform, all of which have been proved possible within a capitalist framework, but about the abolition of capitalism as an economic and social system; it is not about the improvement in the condition of the working class, but about the abolition of that class. Its deepest meaning has seldom been better formulated than by Marx, not the "young Marx," but Marx in the last years of his life:

"... the realm of freedom," Marx wrote, "actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production. . . . Freedom in this field can only consist in socialized man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature. But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy, which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working-day is its basic prerequisite."

(K. Marx, *Capital* (Moscow, 1959), vol. III, pp. 799–800)

It was said earlier that "welfare capitalism" had not stifled the militant assertion of immediate working-class claims. Nor is there anything to suggest that "affluence" must prevent the development of socialist consciousness on a large scale. On the contrary, it is at least arguable that a general improvement in the condition of the working classes, far from being a bar to this development, is one of its preconditions. For experience strongly suggests that it is only *after* elementary needs have ceased to be an incessant, gnawing preoccupation that the socialist critique of capitalism may carry conviction. After all, there is nothing new in the insistence that the most class-conscious and socialist-minded sections of the working classes have not been the most destitute, but those who have escaped from grinding want. On this basis, such "affluence" as advanced capitalist countries will continue to generate is likely to provide at least as favourable a climate for socialist pressure and persuasion as was ever produced in the very unaffluent capitalist societies of yesterday and the day before yesterday. This may not be a very large claim but it does at least remove one obstacle to the serious discussion of socialist strategy in these countries: the discussion may proceed more realistically if it is based on an awareness that socialists

are *not* swimming against an irresistible tide of "affluence." Indeed, the character of capitalist "affluence" itself helps to drive home the lesson that a system whose dynamic is private appropriation and profit makes impossible the rational and human organization and use of the tremendous resources it has brought into being.

Nor, in any assessment of socialist chances in the West, can the rest of the world be left out of account, if only because what happens outside the advanced capitalist countries has direct and indirect repercussions inside them. Two such outside developments represent marked advances from the past and are likely to be of great advantage to Western socialism.

The first of these is the end of colonial rule in Asia and Africa. Anti-colonialism has generally been thought of in the metropolitan countries as a struggle on behalf of the peoples under colonial rule. But the dissolution of the Western empires has also begun to lift from the shoulders of the *Western* Labour movements a burden which they were unable to lift by their own efforts; the end of imperial rule, if not of all forms of imperialism, means, for the *Western* working-class movements, the beginning of the process of liberation from a deeply corrupting imperialist heritage, not least in psychological terms, which has had a profoundly retarding effect upon them. The gain this "end of empire" represents, from a socialist point of view, is not easily susceptible to mathematical calculation; but it is likely to be considerable.

Secondly, de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union has begun, slowly but perceptibly, the liberation of communist parties in the advanced capitalist countries from the intellectual and political strait-jacket in which they have spent so much of their existence. The process is still in its early stages, and habits fostered over two generations are not easily abandoned; but the likely continuation and accentuation of that process must obviously come to constitute an important gain to Western Labour movements as a whole.

Nothing of all this is intended to suggest an inevitable and uninterrupted progress. No one who remembers the dreadful socialist sag in the late 'forties and early 'fifties is likely to hold such a belief; and the possibility of nuclear war should, by itself, be enough to dispel such easy optimism. Yet, when all the qualifications have been made, it remains true that there is nothing in the development of contemporary capitalism, which has made the socialist road harder than in the past—rather the reverse.