PART II

BOLSHEVIK THEORY

I

THE MATERIALISTIC THEORY OF HISTORY

The materialistic conception of history, as it is called, is due to Marx, and underlies the whole Communist philosophy. I do not mean, of course, that a man could not be a Communist without accepting it, but that in fact it is accepted by the Communist Party, and that it profoundly influences their views as to politics and tactics. The name does not convey at all accurately what is meant by the theory. It means that all the mass-phenomena of history are determined by economic motives. This view has no essential connection with materialism in the philosophic sense. Materialism in the philosophic sense may be defined as the theory that all apparently mental occurrences either are really physical, or at any rate have purely physical causes. Materialism in this sense also was preached by Marx, and is accepted by all orthodox Marxians. The arguments for and against it are long and complicated, and need not concern us, since,

in fact, its truth or falsehood has little or no bearing on politics.

In particular, philosophic materialism does not prove that economic causes are fundamental in politics. The view of Buckle, for example, according to which climate is one of the decisive factors, is equally compatible with materialism. So is the Freudian view, which traces everything to sex. There are innumerable ways of viewing history which are materialistic in the philosophic sense without being economic or falling within the Marxian formula. Thus the "materialistic conception of history" may be false even if materialism in the philosophic sense should be true.

On the other hand, economic causes might be at the bottom of all political events even if philosophic materialism were false. Economic causes operate through men's desire for possessions, and would be supreme if this desire were supreme, even if desire could not, from a philosophic point of view, be explained in materialistic terms.

There is, therefore, no logical connection either way between philosophic materialism and what is called the "materialistic conception of history."

It is of some moment to realize such facts as this, because otherwise political theories are both supported and opposed for quite irrelevant reasons, and arguments of theoretical philosophy are employed to determine questions which depend upon concrete facts of

human nature. This mixture damages both philosophy and politics, and is therefore important to avoid.

For another reason, also, the attempt to base a political theory upon a philosophical doctrine is undesirable. The philosophical doctrine of materialism, if true at all, is true everywhere and always; we cannot expect exceptions to it, say, in Buddhism or in the Hussite movement. And so it comes about that people whose politics are supposed to be a consequence of their metaphysics grow absolute and sweeping, unable to admit that a general theory of history is likely, at best, to be only true on the whole and in the main. The dogmatic character of Marxian Communism finds support in the supposed philosophic basis of the doctrine; it has the fixed certainty of Catholic theology, not the changing fluidity and sceptical practicality of modern science.

Treated as a practical approximation, not as an exact metaphysical law, the materialistic conception of history has a very large measure of truth. Take, as an instance of its truth, the influence of industrialism upon ideas. It is industrialism, rather than the arguments of Darwinians and Biblical critics, that has led to the decay of religious belief in the urban working class. At the same time, industrialism has revived religious belief among the rich. In the eighteenth century French aristocrats mostly became free-thinkers; now their descendants are mostly Catholics, because it has become necessary for all the forces of reaction to unite against the revolutionary proletariat. Take, again, the emancipation of women.

Plato, Mary Wolstonecraft, and John Stuart Mill produced admirable arguments, but influenced only a few impotent idealists. The war came, leading to the employment of women in industry on a large scale, and instantly the arguments in favour of votes for women were seen to be irresistible. More than that, traditional sexual morality collapsed, because its whole basis was the economic dependence of women upon their fathers and husbands. Changes in such a matter as sexual morality bring with them profound alterations in the thoughts and feelings of ordinary men and women; they modify law, literature, art, and all kinds of institutions that seem remote from economics.

Such facts as these justify Marxians in speaking, as they do, of "bourgeois ideology," meaning that kind of morality which has been imposed upon the world by the possessors of capital. Contentment with one's lot may be taken as typical of the virtues preached by the rich to the poor. They honestly believe it is a virtue--at any rate they did formerly. The more religious among the poor also believed it, partly from the influence of authority, partly from an impulse to submission, what MacDougall calls "negative self-feeling," which is commoner than some people think. Similarly men preached the virtue of female chastity, and women usually accepted their teaching; both really believed the doctrine, but its persistence was only possible through the economic power of men. This led erring women to punishment here on earth, which made further punishment hereafter seem probable. When the economic penalty ceased, the conviction of sinfulness gradually decayed. In such changes we see the collapse of "bourgeois

ideology."

But in spite of the fundamental importance of economic facts in determining the politics and beliefs of an age or nation, I do not think that non-economic factors can be neglected without risks of errors which may be fatal in practice.

The most obvious non-economic factor, and the one the neglect of which has led Socialists most astray, is nationalism. Of course a nation, once formed, has economic interests which largely determine its politics; but it is not, as a rule, economic motives that decide what group of human beings shall form a nation. Trieste, before the war, considered itself Italian, although its whole prosperity as a port depended upon its belonging to Austria. No economic motive can account for the opposition between Ulster and the rest of Ireland. In Eastern Europe, the Balkanization produced by self-determination has been obviously disastrous from an economic point of view, and was demanded for reasons which were in essence sentimental. Throughout the war wage-earners, with only a few exceptions, allowed themselves to be governed by nationalist feeling, and ignored the traditional Communist exhortation: "Workers of the world, unite." According to Marxian orthodoxy, they were misled by cunning capitalists, who made their profit out of the slaughter. But to any one capable of observing psychological facts, it is obvious that this is largely a myth. Immense numbers of capitalists were ruined by the war; those who were young were just as liable to be killed as the proletarians were. No

doubt commercial rivalry between England and Germany had a great deal to do with causing the war; but rivalry is a different thing from profit-seeking. Probably by combination English and German capitalists could have made more than they did out of rivalry, but the rivalry was instinctive, and its economic form was accidental. The capitalists were in the grip of nationalist instinct as much as their proletarian "dupes." In both classes some have gained by the war; but the universal will to war was not produced by the hope of gain. It was produced by a different set of instincts, and one which Marxian psychology fails to recognize adequately.

The Marxian assumes that a man's "herd," from the point of view of herd-instinct, is his class, and that he will combine with those whose economic class-interest is the same as his. This is only very partially true in fact. Religion has been the most decisive factor in determining a man's herd throughout long periods of the world's history. Even now a Catholic working man will vote for a Catholic capitalist rather than for an unbelieving Socialist. In America the divisions in local elections are mainly on religious lines. This is no doubt convenient for the capitalists, and tends to make them religious men; but the capitalists alone could not produce the result. The result is produced by the fact that many working men prefer the advancement of their creed to the improvement of their livelihood. However deplorable such a state of mind may be, it is not necessarily due to capitalist lies.

All politics are governed by human desires. The materialist theory of history, in the last analysis, requires the assumption that every politically conscious person is governed by one single desire--the desire to increase his own share of commodities; and, further, that his method of achieving this desire will usually be to seek to increase the share of his class, not only his own individual share. But this assumption is very far from the truth. Men desire power, they desire satisfactions for their pride and their self-respect. They desire victory over rivals so profoundly that they will invent a rivalry for the unconscious purpose of making a victory possible. All these motives cut across the pure economic motive in ways that are practically important.

There is need of a treatment of political motives by the methods of psycho-analysis. In politics, as in private life, men invent myths to rationalize their conduct. If a man thinks that the only reasonable motive in politics is economic self-advancement, he will persuade himself that the things he wishes to do will make him rich. When he wants to fight the Germans, he tells himself that their competition is ruining his trade. If, on the other hand, he is an "idealist," who holds that his politics should aim at the advancement of the human race, he will tell himself that the crimes of the Germans demand their humiliation. The Marxian sees through this latter camouflage, but not through the former. To desire one's own economic advancement is comparatively reasonable; to Marx, who inherited eighteenth-century rationalist psychology from the British orthodox economists,

self-enrichment seemed the natural aim of a man's political actions. But modern psychology has dived much deeper into the ocean of insanity upon which the little barque of human reason insecurely floats. The intellectual optimism of a bygone age is no longer possible to the modern student of human nature. Yet it lingers in Marxism, making Marxians rigid and Procrustean in their treatment of the life of instinct. Of this rigidity the materialistic conception of history is a prominent instance.

In the next chapter I shall attempt to outline a political psychology which seems to me more nearly true than that of Marx.

II

DECIDING FORCES IN POLITICS

The larger events in the political life of the world are determined by the interaction of material conditions and human passions. The operation of the passions on the material conditions is modified by intelligence. The passions themselves may be modified by alien intelligence guided by alien passions. So far, such modification has been wholly unscientific, but it may in time become as precise as engineering.

The classification of the passions which is most convenient in political theory is somewhat different from that which would be adopted in psychology.

We may begin with desires for the necessaries of life: food, drink, sex, and (in cold climates) clothing and housing. When these are threatened, there is no limit to the activity and violence that men will display.

Planted upon these primitive desires are a number of secondary desires. Love of property, of which the fundamental political importance is obvious, may be derived historically and psychologically from the hoarding instinct. Love of the good opinion of others (which

we may call vanity) is a desire which man shares with many animals; it is perhaps derivable from courtship, but has great survival value, among gregarious animals, in regard to others besides possible mates. Rivalry and love of power are perhaps developments of jealousy; they are akin, but not identical.

These four passions--acquisitiveness, vanity, rivalry, and love of power--are, after the basic instincts, the prime movers of almost all that happens in politics. Their operation is intensified and regularized by herd instinct. But herd instinct, by its very nature, cannot be a prime mover, since it merely causes the herd to act in unison, without determining what the united action is to be. Among men, as among other gregarious animals, the united action, in any given circumstances, is determined partly by the common passions of the herd, partly by imitation of leaders. The art of politics consists in causing the latter to prevail over the former.

Of the four passions we have enumerated, only one, namely acquisitiveness, is concerned at all directly with men's relations to their material conditions. The other three--vanity, rivalry, and love of power--are concerned with social relations. I think this is the source of what is erroneous in the Marxian interpretation of history, which tacitly assumes that acquisitiveness is the source of all political actions. It is clear that many men willingly forego wealth for the sake of power and glory, and that nations habitually sacrifice riches to rivalry with other nations. The desire for some form of

superiority is common to almost all energetic men. No social system which attempts to thwart it can be stable, since the lazy majority will never be a match for the energetic minority.

What is called "virtue" is an offshoot of vanity: it is the habit of acting in a manner which others praise.

The operation of material conditions may be illustrated by the statement (Myers's Dawn of History) that four of the greatest movements of conquest have been due to drought in Arabia, causing the nomads of that country to migrate into regions already inhabited. The last of these four movements was the rise of Islam. In these four cases, the primal need of food and drink was enough to set events in motion; but as this need could only be satisfied by conquest, the four secondary passions must have very soon come into play. In the conquests of modern industrialism, the secondary passions have been almost wholly dominant, since those who directed them had no need to fear hunger or thirst. It is the potency of vanity and love of power that gives hope for the industrial future of Soviet Russia, since it enables the Communist State to enlist in its service men whose abilities might give them vast wealth in a capitalistic society.

Intelligence modifies profoundly the operation of material conditions. When America was first discovered, men only desired gold and silver; consequently the portions first settled were not those that are now most profitable. The Bessemer process created the German iron and

steel industry; inventions requiring oil have created a demand for that commodity which is one of the chief influences in international politics.

The intelligence which has this profound effect on politics is not political, but scientific and technical: it is the kind of intelligence which discovers how to make nature minister to human passions. Tungsten had no value until it was found to be useful in the manufacture of shells and electric light, but now people will, if necessary, kill each other in order to acquire tungsten. Scientific intelligence is the cause of this change.

The progress or retrogression of the world depends, broadly speaking, upon the balance between acquisitiveness and rivalry. The former makes for progress, the latter for retrogression. When intelligence provides improved methods of production, these may be employed to increase the general share of goods, or to set apart more of the labour power of the community for the business of killing its rivals. Until 1914, acquisitiveness had prevailed, on the whole, since the fall of Napoleon; the past six years have seen a prevalence of the instinct of rivalry. Scientific intelligence makes it possible to indulge this instinct more fully than is possible for primitive peoples, since it sets free more men from the labour of producing necessaries. It is possible that scientific intelligence may, in time, reach the point when it will enable rivalry to exterminate the human race. This is the most hopeful method of bringing about an end of war.

For those who do not like this method, there is another: the study of scientific psychology and physiology. The physiological causes of emotions have begun to be known, through the studies of such men as Cannon (Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear and Rage). In time, it may become possible, by physiological means, to alter the whole emotional nature of a population. It will then depend upon the passions of the rulers how this power is used. Success will come to the State which discovers how to promote pugnacity to the extent required for external war, but not to the extent which would lead to domestic dissensions. There is no method by which it can be insured that rulers shall desire the good of mankind, and therefore there is no reason to suppose that the power to modify men's emotional nature would cause progress.

If men desired to diminish rivalry, there is an obvious method. Habits of power intensify the passion of rivalry; therefore a State in which power is concentrated will, other things being equal, be more bellicose than one in which power is diffused. For those who dislike wars, this is an additional argument against all forms of dictatorship. But dislike of war is far less common than we used to suppose; and those who like war can use the same argument to support dictatorship.

III

BOLSHEVIK CRITICISM OF DEMOCRACY

The Bolshevik argument against Parliamentary democracy as a method of achieving Socialism is a powerful one. My answer to it lies rather in pointing out what I believe to be fallacies in the Bolshevik method, from which I conclude that no swift method exists of establishing any desirable form of Socialism. But let us first see what the Bolshevik argument is.

In the first place, it assumes that those to whom it is addressed are absolutely certain that Communism is desirable, so certain that they are willing, if necessary, to force it upon an unwilling population at the point of the bayonet. It then proceeds to argue that, while capitalism retains its hold over propaganda and its means of corruption, Parliamentary methods are very unlikely to give a majority for Communism in the House of Commons, or to lead to effective action by such a majority even if it existed. Communists point out how the people are deceived, and how their chosen leaders have again and again betrayed them. From this they argue that the destruction of capitalism must be sudden and catastrophic; that it must be the work of a minority; and that it cannot be effected constitutionally or without violence. It is therefore, in their view, the duty of the Communist party in a capitalist country to prepare for armed conflict,

and to take all possible measure for disarming the bourgeoisie and arming that part of the proletariat which is willing to support the Communists.

There is an air of realism and disillusionment about this position, which makes it attractive to those idealists who wish to think themselves cynics. But I think there are various points in which it fails to be as realistic as it pretends.

In the first place, it makes much of the treachery of Labour leaders in constitutional movements, but does not consider the possibility of the treachery of Communist leaders in a revolution. To this the Marxian would reply that in constitutional movements men are bought, directly or indirectly, by the money of the capitalists, but that revolutionary Communism would leave the capitalists no money with which to attempt corruption. This has been achieved in Russia, and could be achieved elsewhere. But selling oneself to the capitalists is not the only possible form of treachery. It is also possible, having acquired power, to use it for one's own ends instead of for the people. This is what I believe to be likely to happen in Russia: the establishment of a bureaucratic aristocracy, concentrating authority in its own hands, and creating a régime just as oppressive and cruel as that of capitalism. Marxians never sufficiently recognize that love of power is quite as strong a motive, and quite as great a source of injustice, as love of money; yet this must be obvious to any unbiased student of politics. It is also obvious that the method of violent

revolution leading to a minority dictatorship is one peculiarly calculated to create habits of despotism which would survive the crisis by which they were generated. Communist politicians are likely to become just like the politicians of other parties: a few will be honest, but the great majority will merely cultivate the art of telling a plausible tale with a view to tricking the people into entrusting them with power. The only possible way by which politicians as a class can be improved is the political and psychological education of the people, so that they may learn to detect a humbug. In England men have reached the point of suspecting a good speaker, but if a man speaks badly they think he must be honest. Unfortunately, virtue is not so widely diffused as this theory would imply.

In the second place, it is assumed by the Communist argument that, although capitalist propaganda can prevent the majority from becoming Communists, yet capitalist laws and police forces cannot prevent the Communists, while still a minority, from acquiring a supremacy of military power. It is thought that secret propaganda can undermine the army and navy, although it is admittedly impossible to get the majority to vote at elections for the programme of the Bolsheviks. This view is based upon Russian experience, where the army and navy had suffered defeat and had been brutally ill used by incompetent Tsarist authorities. The argument has no application to more efficient and successful States. Among the Germans, even in defeat, it was the civilian population that began the revolution.

There is a further assumption in the Bolshevik argument which seems to me quite unwarrantable. It is assumed that the capitalist governments will have learned nothing from the experience of Russia. Before the Russian Revolution, governments had not studied Bolshevik theory. And defeat in war created a revolutionary mood throughout Central and Eastern Europe. But now the holders of power are on their guard. There seems no reason whatever to suppose that they will supinely permit a preponderance of armed force to pass into the hands of those who wish to overthrow them, while, according to the Bolshevik theory, they are still sufficiently popular to be supported by a majority at the polls.
Is it not as clear as noonday that in a democratic country it is more difficult for the proletariat to destroy the Government by arms than to defeat it in a general election? Seeing the immense advantages of a Government in dealing with rebels, it seems clear that rebellion could have little hope of success unless a very large majority supported it.
Of course, if the army and navy were specially revolutionary, they might effect an unpopular revolution; but this situation, though something like it occurred in Russia, is hardly to be expected in the Western nations. This whole Bolshevik theory of revolution by a minority is one which might just conceivably have succeeded as a secret plot, but becomes impossible as soon as it is openly avowed and advocated.

But perhaps it will be said that I am caricaturing the Bolshevik doctrine of revolution. It is urged by advocates of this doctrine, quite truly, that all political events are brought about by

minorities, since the majority are indifferent to politics. But there is a difference between a minority in which the indifferent acquiesce, and a minority so hated as to startle the indifferent into belated action. To make the Bolshevik doctrine reasonable, it is necessary to suppose that they believe the majority can be induced to acquiesce, at least temporarily, in the revolution made by the class-conscious minority. This, again, is based upon Russian experience: desire for peace and land led to a widespread support of the Bolsheviks in November 1917 on the part of people who have subsequently shown no love for Communism.

I think we come here to an essential part of Bolshevik philosophy. In the moment of revolution, Communists are to have some popular cry by which they win more support than mere Communism could win. Having thus acquired the State machine, they are to use it for their own ends. But this, again, is a method which can only be practised successfully so long as it is not avowed. It is to some extent habitual in politics. The Unionists in 1900 won a majority on the Boer War, and used it to endow brewers and Church schools. The Liberals in 1906 won a majority on Chinese labour, and used it to cement the secret alliance with France and to make an alliance with Tsarist Russia. President Wilson, in 1916, won his majority on neutrality, and used it to come into the war. This method is part of the stock-in-trade of democracy. But its success depends upon repudiating it until the moment comes to practise it. Those who, like the Bolsheviks, have the honesty to proclaim in advance their intention of using power for other ends than those for

which it was given them, are not likely to have a chance of carrying out their designs.

What seems to me to emerge from these considerations is this: That in a democratic and politically educated country, armed revolution in favour of Communism would have no chance of succeeding unless it were supported by a larger majority than would be required for the election of a Communist Government by constitutional methods. It is possible that, if such a Government came into existence, and proceeded to carry out its programme, it would be met by armed resistance on the part of capital, including a large proportion of the officers in the army and navy. But in subduing this resistance it would have the support of that great body of opinion which believes in legality and upholds the constitution. Moreover, having, by hypothesis, converted a majority of the nation, a Communist Government could be sure of loyal help from immense numbers of workers, and would not be forced, as the Bolsheviks are in Russia, to suspect treachery everywhere. Under these circumstances, I believe that the resistance of the capitalists could be quelled without much difficulty, and would receive little support from moderate people. Whereas, in a minority revolt of Communists against a capitalist Government, all moderate opinion would be on the side of capitalism.

The contention that capitalist propaganda is what prevents the adoption of Communism by wage-earners is only very partially true. Capitalist propaganda has never been able to prevent the Irish from

voting against the English, though it has been applied to this object with great vigour. It has proved itself powerless, over and over again, in opposing nationalist movements which had almost no moneyed support. It has been unable to cope with religious feeling. And those industrial populations which would most obviously benefit by Socialism have, in the main, adopted it, in spite of the opposition of employers. The plain truth is that Socialism does not arouse the same passionate interest in the average citizen as is roused by nationality and used to be roused by religion. It is not unlikely that things may change in this respect: we may be approaching a period of economic civil wars comparable to that of the religious civil wars that followed the Reformation. In such a period, nationalism is submerged by party: British and German Socialists, or British and German capitalists, will feel more kinship with each other than with compatriots of the opposite political camp. But when that day comes, there will be no difficulty, in highly industrial countries, in securing Socialist majorities; if Socialism is not then carried without bloodshed, it will be due to the unconstitutional action of the rich, not to the need of revolutionary violence on the part of the advocates of the proletariat. Whether such a state of opinion grows up or not depends mainly upon the stubbornness or conciliatoriness of the possessing classes, and, conversely, upon the moderation or violence of those who desire fundamental economic change. The majority which Bolsheviks regard as unattainable is chiefly prevented by the ruthlessness of their own tactics.

Apart from all arguments of detail, there are two broad objections to violent revolution in a democratic community. The first is that, when once the principle of respecting majorities as expressed at the ballot-box is abandoned, there is no reason to suppose that victory will be secured by the particular minority to which one happens to belong. There are many minorities besides Communists: religious minorities, teetotal minorities, militarist minorities, capitalist minorities. Any one of these could adopt the method of obtaining power advocated by the Bolsheviks, and any one would be just as likely to succeed as they are. What restrains these minorities, more or less, at present, is respect for the law and the constitution. Bolsheviks tacitly assume that every other party will preserve this respect while they themselves, unhindered, prepare the revolution. But if their philosophy of violence becomes popular, there is not the slightest reason to suppose that they will be its beneficiaries. They believe that Communism is for the good of the majority; they ought to believe that they can persuade the majority on this question, and to have the patience to set about the task of winning by propaganda.

The second argument of principle against the method of minority violence is that abandonment of law, when it becomes widespread, lets loose the wild beast, and gives a free rein to the primitive lusts and egoisms which civilization in some degree curbs. Every student of mediæval thought must have been struck by the extraordinarily high value placed upon law in that period. The reason was that, in countries infested by robber barons, law was the first requisite of

progress. We, in the modern world, take it for granted that most people will be law-abiding, and we hardly realize what centuries of effort have gone to making such an assumption possible. We forget how many of the good things that we unquestionably expect would disappear out of life if murder, rape, and robbery with violence became common. And we forget even more how very easily this might happen. The universal class-war foreshadowed by the Third International, following upon the loosening of restraints produced by the late war, and combined with a deliberate inculcation of disrespect for law and constitutional government, might, and I believe would, produce a state of affairs in which it would be habitual to murder men for a crust of bread, and in which women would only be safe while armed men protected them. The civilized nations have accepted democratic government as a method of settling internal disputes without violence. Democratic government may have all the faults attributed to it, but it has the one great merit that people are, on the whole, willing to accept it as a substitute for civil war in political disputes. Whoever sets to work to weaken this acceptance, whether in Ulster or in Moscow, is taking a fearful responsibility. Civilization is not so stable that it cannot be broken up; and a condition of lawless violence is not one out of which any good thing is likely to emerge. For this reason, if for no other, revolutionary violence in a democracy is infinitely dangerous.

IV

REVOLUTION AND DICTATORSHIP

The Bolsheviks have a very definite programme for achieving Communism--a programme which has been set forth by Lenin repeatedly, and quite recently in the reply of the Third International to the questionnaire submitted by the Independent Labour Party.

Capitalists, we are assured, will stick at nothing in defence of their privileges. It is the nature of man, in so far as he is politically conscious, to fight for the interests of his class so long as classes exist. When the conflict is not pushed to extremes, methods of conciliation and political deception may be preferable to actual physical warfare; but as soon as the proletariat make a really vital attack upon the capitalists, they will be met by guns and bayonets. This being certain and inevitable, it is as well to be prepared for it, and to conduct propaganda accordingly. Those who pretend that pacific methods can lead to the realization of Communism are false friends to the wage-earners; intentionally or unintentionally, they are covert allies of the bourgeoisie.

There must, then, according to Bolshevik theory, be armed conflict sooner or later, if the injustices of the present economic system are ever to be remedied. Not only do they assume armed conflict: they have

a fairly definite conception of the way in which it is to be conducted. This conception has been carried out in Russia, and is to be carried out, before very long, in every civilized country. The Communists, who represent the class-conscious wage-earners, wait for some propitious moment when events have caused a mood of revolutionary discontent with the existing Government. They then put themselves at the head of the discontent, carry through a successful revolution, and in so doing acquire the arms, the railways, the State treasure, and all the other resources upon which the power of modern Governments is built. They then confine political power to Communists, however small a minority they may be of the whole nation. They set to work to increase their number by propaganda and the control of education. And meanwhile, they introduce Communism into every department of economic life as quickly as possible.

Ultimately, after a longer or shorter period, according to circumstances, the nation will be converted to Communism, the relics of capitalist institutions will have been obliterated, and it will be possible to restore freedom. But the political conflicts to which we are accustomed will not reappear. All the burning political questions of our time, according to the Communists, are questions of class conflict, and will disappear when the division of classes disappears. Accordingly the State will no longer be required, since the State is essentially an engine of power designed to give the victory to one side in the class conflict. Ordinary States are designed to give the victory to the capitalists; the proletarian State (Soviet Russia) is

designed to give the victory to the wage-earners. As soon as the community contains only wage-earners, the State will cease to have any functions. And so, through a period of dictatorship, we shall finally arrive at a condition very similar to that aimed at by Anarchist Communism.

Three questions arise in regard to this method of reaching Utopia. First, would the ultimate state foreshadowed by the Bolsheviks be desirable in itself? Secondly, would the conflict involved in achieving it by the Bolshevik method be so bitter and prolonged that its evils would outweigh the ultimate good? Thirdly, is this method likely to lead, in the end, to the state which the Bolsheviks desire, or will it fail at some point and arrive at a quite different result? If we are to be Bolsheviks, we must answer all these questions in a sense favourable to their programme.

As regards the first question, I have no hesitation in answering it in a manner favourable to Communism. It is clear that the present inequalities of wealth are unjust. In part, they may be defended as affording an incentive to useful industry, but I do not think this defence will carry us very far. However, I have argued this question before in my book on Roads to Freedom, and I will not spend time upon it now. On this matter, I concede the Bolshevik case. It is the other two questions that I wish to discuss.

Our second question was: Is the ultimate good aimed at by the

Bolsheviks sufficiently great to be worth the price that, according to their own theory, will have to be paid for achieving it?

If anything human were absolutely certain, we might answer this question affirmatively with some confidence. The benefits of Communism, if it were once achieved, might be expected to be lasting; we might legitimately hope that further change would be towards something still better, not towards a revival of ancient evils. But if we admit, as we must do, that the outcome of the Communist revolution is in some degree uncertain, it becomes necessary to count the cost; for a great part of the cost is all but certain.

Since the revolution of October, 1917, the Soviet Government has been at war with almost all the world, and has had at the same time to face civil war at home. This is not to be regarded as accidental, or as a misfortune which could not be foreseen. According to Marxian theory, what has happened was bound to happen. Indeed, Russia has been wonderfully fortunate in not having to face an even more desperate situation. First and foremost, the world was exhausted by the war, and in no mood for military adventures. Next, the Tsarist régime was the worst in Europe, and therefore rallied less support than would be secured by any other capitalist Government. Again, Russia is vast and agricultural, making it capable of resisting both invasion and blockade better than Great Britain or France or Germany. The only other country that could have resisted with equal success is the United States, which is at present very far removed from a proletarian

revolution, and likely long to remain the chief bulwark of the capitalist system. It is evident that Great Britain, attempting a similar revolution, would be forced by starvation to yield within a few months, provided America led a policy of blockade. The same is true, though in a less degree, of continental countries. Therefore, unless and until an international Communist revolution becomes possible, we must expect that any other nation following Russia's example will have to pay an even higher price than Russia has had to pay.

Now the price that Russia is having to pay is very great. The almost universal poverty might be thought to be a small evil in comparison with the ultimate gain, but it brings with it other evils of which the magnitude would be acknowledged even by those who have never known poverty and therefore make light of it. Hunger brings an absorption in the question of food, which, to most people, makes life almost purely animal. The general shortage makes people fierce, and reacts upon the political atmosphere. The necessity of inculcating Communism produces a hot-house condition, where every breath of fresh air must be excluded: people are to be taught to think in a certain way, and all free intelligence becomes taboo. The country comes to resemble an immensely magnified Jesuit College. Every kind of liberty is banned as being "bourgeois"; but it remains a fact that intelligence languishes where thought is not free.

All this, however, according to the leaders of the Third

International, is only a small beginning of the struggle, which must become world-wide before it achieves victory. In their reply to the Independent Labour Party they say:

> It is probable that upon the throwing off of the chains of the capitalist Governments, the revolutionary proletariat of Europe will meet the resistance of Anglo-Saxon capital in the persons of British and American capitalists who will attempt to blockade it. It is then possible that the revolutionary proletariat of Europe will rise in union with the peoples of the East and commence a revolutionary struggle, the scene of which will be the entire world, to deal a final blow to British and American capitalism (The Times, July 30, 1920).

The war here prophesied, if it ever takes place, will be one compared to which the late war will come to seem a mere affair of outposts. Those who realize the destructiveness of the late war, the devastation and impoverishment, the lowering of the level of civilization throughout vast areas, the general increase of hatred and savagery, the letting loose of bestial instincts which had been curbed during peace--those who realize all this will hesitate to incur inconceivably greater horrors, even if they believe firmly that Communism in itself is much to be desired. An economic system cannot be considered apart from the population which is to carry it out; and the population resulting from such a world-war as Moscow calmly contemplates would be savage, bloodthirsty and ruthless to an extent that must make any

system a mere engine of oppression and cruelty.

This brings us to our third question: Is the system which Communists regard as their goal likely to result from the adoption of their methods? This is really the most vital question of the three.

Advocacy of Communism by those who believe in Bolshevik methods rests upon the assumption that there is no slavery except economic slavery, and that when all goods are held in common there must be perfect liberty. I fear this is a delusion.

There must be administration, there must be officials who control distribution. These men, in a Communist State, are the repositories of power. So long as they control the army, they are able, as in Russia at this moment, to wield despotic power even if they are a small minority. The fact that there is Communism--to a certain extent--does not mean that there is liberty. If the Communism were more complete, it would not necessarily mean more freedom; there would still be certain officials in control of the food supply, and these officials could govern as they pleased so long as they retained the support of the soldiers. This is not mere theory: it is the patent lesson of the present condition of Russia. The Bolshevik theory is that a small minority are to seize power, and are to hold it until Communism is accepted practically universally, which, they admit, may take a long time. But power is sweet, and few men surrender it voluntarily. It is especially sweet to those who have the habit of it, and the habit

becomes most ingrained in those who have governed by bayonets, without popular support. Is it not almost inevitable that men placed as the Bolsheviks are placed in Russia, and as they maintain that the Communists must place themselves wherever the social revolution succeeds, will be loath to relinquish their monopoly of power, and will find reasons for remaining until some new revolution ousts them? Would it not be fatally easy for them, without altering economic structure, to decree large salaries for high Government officials, and so reintroduce the old inequalities of wealth? What motive would they have for not doing so? What motive is possible except idealism, love of mankind, non-economic motives of the sort that Bolsheviks decry? The system created by violence and the forcible rule of a minority must necessarily allow of tyranny and exploitation; and if human nature is what Marxians assert it to be, why should the rulers neglect such opportunities of selfish advantage?

It is sheer nonsense to pretend that the rulers of a great empire such as Soviet Russia, when they have become accustomed to power, retain the proletarian psychology, and feel that their class-interest is the same as that of the ordinary working man. This is not the case in fact in Russia now, however the truth may be concealed by fine phrases. The Government has a class-consciousness and a class-interest quite distinct from those of the genuine proletarian, who is not to be confounded with the paper proletarian of the Marxian schema. In a capitalist state, the Government and the capitalists on the whole hang together, and form one class; in Soviet Russia, the Government has

absorbed the capitalist mentality together with the governmental, and the fusion has given increased strength to the upper class. But I see no reason whatever to expect equality or freedom to result from such a system, except reasons derived from a false psychology and a mistaken analysis of the sources of political power.

I am compelled to reject Bolshevism for two reasons: First, because the price mankind must pay to achieve Communism by Bolshevik methods is too terrible; and secondly because, even after paying the price, I do not believe the result would be what the Bolsheviks profess to desire.

But if their methods are rejected, how are we ever to arrive at a better economic system? This is not an easy question, and I shall treat it in a separate chapter.

V

MECHANISM AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Is it possible to effect a fundamental reform of the existing economic system by any other method than that of Bolshevism? The difficulty of answering this question is what chiefly attracts idealists to the dictatorship of the proletariat. If, as I have argued, the method of violent revolution and Communist rule is not likely to have the results which idealists desire, we are reduced to despair unless we call see hope in other methods. The Bolshevik arguments against all other methods are powerful. I confess that, when the spectacle of present-day Russia forced me to disbelieve in Bolshevik methods, I was at first unable to see any way of curing the essential evils of capitalism. My first impulse was to abandon political thinking as a bad job, and to conclude that the strong and ruthless must always exploit the weaker and kindlier sections of the population. But this is not an attitude that can be long maintained by any vigorous and temperamentally hopeful person. Of course, if it were the truth, one would have to acquiesce. Some people believe that by living on sour milk one can achieve immortality. Such optimists are answered by a mere refutation; it is not necessary to go on and point out some other way of escaping death. Similarly an argument that Bolshevism will not lead to the millennium would remain valid even if it could be shown that the millennium cannot be reached by any other road. But the truth

in social questions is not quite like truth in physiology or physics, since it depends upon men's beliefs. Optimism tends to verify itself by making people impatient of avoidable evils; while despair, on the other hand, makes the world as bad as it believes it to be. It is therefore imperative for those who do not believe in Bolshevism to put some other hope in its place.

I think there are two things that must be admitted: first, that many of the worst evils of capitalism might survive under Communism; secondly, that the cure for these evils cannot be sudden, since it requires changes in the average mentality.

What are the chief evils of the present system? I do not think that mere inequality of wealth, in itself, is a very grave evil. If everybody had enough, the fact that some have more than enough would be unimportant. With a very moderate improvement in methods of production, it would be easy to ensure that everybody should have enough, even under capitalism, if wars and preparations for wars were abolished. The problem of poverty is by no means insoluble within the existing system, except when account is taken of psychological factors and the uneven distribution of power.

The graver evils of the capitalist system all arise from its uneven distribution of power. The possessors of capital wield an influence quite out of proportion to their numbers or their services to the community. They control almost the whole of education and the press;

they decide what the average man shall know or not know; the cinema has given them a new method of propaganda, by which they enlist the support of those who are too frivolous even for illustrated papers. Very little of the intelligence of the world is really free: most of it is, directly or indirectly, in the pay of business enterprises or wealthy philanthropists. To satisfy capitalist interests, men are compelled to work much harder and more monotonously than they ought to work, and their education is scamped. Wherever, as in barbarous or semi-civilized countries, labour is too weak or too disorganized to protect itself, appalling cruelties are practised for private profit. Economic and political organizations become more and more vast, leaving less and less room for individual development and initiative. It is this sacrifice of the individual to the machine that is the fundamental evil of the modern world.

To cure this evil is not easy, because efficiency is promoted, at any given moment, though not in the long run, by sacrificing the individual to the smooth working of a vast organization, whether military or industrial. In war and in commercial competition, it is necessary to control individual impulses, to treat men as so many "bayonets" or "sabres" or "hands," not as a society of separate people with separate tastes and capacities. Some sacrifice of individual impulses is, of course, essential to the existence of an ordered community, and this degree of sacrifice is, as a rule, not regretable even from the individual's point of view. But what is demanded in a highly militarized or industrialized nation goes far beyond this very

moderate degree. A society which is to allow much freedom to the individual must be strong enough to be not anxious about home defence, moderate enough to refrain from difficult external conquests, and rich enough to value leisure and a civilized existence more than an increase of consumable commodities.

But where the material conditions for such a state of affairs exist, the psychological conditions are not likely to exist unless power is very widely diffused throughout the community. Where power is concentrated in a few, it will happen, unless those few are very exceptional people, that they will value tangible achievements in the way of increase in trade or empire more than the slow and less obvious improvements that would result from better education combined with more leisure. The joys of victory are especially great to the holders of power, while the evils of a mechanical organization fall almost exclusively upon the less influential. For these reasons, I do not believe that any community in which power is much concentrated will long refrain from conflicts of the kind involving a sacrifice of what is most valuable in the individual. In Russia at this moment, the sacrifice of the individual is largely inevitable, because of the severity of the economic and military struggle. But I did not feel, in the Bolsheviks, any consciousness of the magnitude of this misfortune, or any realization of the importance of the individual as against the State. Nor do I believe that men who do realize this are likely to succeed, or to come to the top, in times when everything has to be done against personal liberty. The Bolshevik theory requires that

every country, sooner or later, should go through what Russia is going through now. And in every country in such a condition we may expect to find the government falling into the hands of ruthless men, who have not by nature any love for freedom, and who will see little importance in hastening the transition from dictatorship to freedom. It is far more likely that such men will be tempted to embark upon new enterprises, requiring further concentration of forces, and postponing indefinitely the liberation of the populations which they use as their material.

For these reasons, equalization of wealth without equalization of power seems to me a rather small and unstable achievement. But equalization of power is not a thing that can be achieved in a day. It requires a considerable level of moral, intellectual, and technical education. It requires a long period without extreme crises, in order that habits of tolerance and good nature may become common. It requires vigour on the part of those who are acquiring power, without a too desperate resistance on the part of those whose share is diminishing. This is only possible if those who are acquiring power are not very fierce, and do not terrify their opponents by threats of ruin and death. It cannot be done quickly, because quick methods require that very mechanism and subordination of the individual which we should struggle to prevent.

But even equalization of power is not the whole of what is needed politically. The right grouping of men for different purposes is also

essential. Self-government in industry, for example, is an indispensable condition of a good society. Those acts of an individual or a group which have no very great importance for outsiders ought to be freely decided by that individual or group. This is recognized as regards religion, but ought to be recognized over a much wider field.

Bolshevik theory seems to me to err by concentrating its attention upon one evil, namely inequality of wealth, which it believes to be at the bottom of all others. I do not believe any one evil can be thus isolated, but if I had to select one as the greatest of political evils, I should select inequality of power. And I should deny that this is likely to be cured by the class-war and the dictatorship of the Communist party. Only peace and a long period of gradual improvement can bring it about.

Good relations between individuals, freedom from hatred and violence and oppression, genera diffusion of education, leisure rationally employed, the progress of art and science--these seem to me among the most important ends that a political theory ought to have in view. I do not believe that they can be furthered, except very rarely, by revolution and war; and I am convinced that at the present moment they can only be promoted by a diminution in the spirit of ruthlessness generated by the war. For these reasons, while admitting the necessity and even utility of Bolshevism in Russia, I do not wish to see it spread, or to encourage the adoption of its philosophy by advanced parties in the Western nations.

VI

WHY RUSSIAN COMMUNISM HAS FAILED

The civilized world seems almost certain, sooner or later, to follow the example of Russia in attempting a Communist organization of society. I believe that the attempt is essential to the progress and happiness of mankind during the next few centuries, but I believe also that the transition has appalling dangers. I believe that, if the Bolshevik theory as to the method of transition is adopted by Communists in Western nations, the result will be a prolonged chaos, leading neither to Communism nor to any other civilized system, but to a relapse into the barbarism of the Dark Ages. In the interests of Communism, no less than in the interests of civilization, I think it imperative that the Russian failure should be admitted and analysed. For this reason, if for no other, I cannot enter into the conspiracy of concealment which many Western Socialists who have visited Russia consider necessary.

I shall try first to recapitulate the facts which make me regard the Russian experiment as a failure, and then to seek out the causes of failure.

The most elementary failure in Russia is in regard to food. In a country which formerly produced a vast exportable surplus of cereals

and other agricultural produce, and in which the non-agricultural population is only 15 per cent. of the total, it ought to be possible, without great difficulty, to provide enough food for the towns. Yet the Government has failed badly in this respect. The rations are inadequate and irregular, so that it is impossible to preserve health and vigour without the help of food purchased illicitly in the markets at speculative prices. I have given reasons for thinking that the breakdown of transport, though a contributory cause, is not the main reason for the shortage. The main reason is the hostility of the peasants, which, in turn, is due to the collapse of industry and to the policy of forced requisitions. In regard to corn and flour, the Government requisitions all that the peasant produces above a certain minimum required for himself and his family. If, instead, it exacted a fixed amount as rent, it would not destroy his incentive to production, and would not provide nearly such a strong motive for concealment. But this plan would have enabled the peasants to grow rich, and would have involved a confessed abandonment of Communist theory. It has therefore been thought better to employ forcible methods, which led to disaster, as they were bound to do.

The collapse of industry was the chief cause of the food difficulties, and has in turn been aggravated by them. Owing to the fact that there is abundant food in the country, industrial and urban workers are perpetually attempting to abandon their employment for agriculture. This is illegal, and is severely punished, by imprisonment or convict labour. Nevertheless it continues, and in so vast a country as Russia

it is not possible to prevent it. Thus the ranks of industry become still further depleted.

Except as regards munitions of war, the collapse of industry in Russia is extraordinarily complete. The resolutions passed by the Ninth Congress of the Communist Party (April, 1920) speak of "the incredible catastrophes of public economy." This language is not too strong, though the recovery of the Baku oil has done something to produce a revival along the Volga basin.

The failure of the whole industrial side of the national economy, including transport, is at the bottom of the other failures of the Soviet Government. It is, to begin with, the main cause of the unpopularity of the Communists both in town and country: in town, because the people are hungry; in the country, because food is taken with no return except paper. If industry had been prosperous, the peasants could have had clothes and agricultural machinery, for which they would have willingly parted with enough food for the needs of the towns. The town population could then have subsisted in tolerable comfort; disease could have been coped with, and the general lowering of vitality averted. It would not have been necessary, as it has been in many cases, for men of scientific or artistic capacity to abandon the pursuits in which they were skilled for unskilled manual labour. The Communist Republic might have been agreeable to live in--at least for those who had been very poor before.

The unpopularity of the Bolsheviks, which is primarily due to the collapse of industry, has in turn been accentuated by the measures which it has driven the Government to adopt. In view of the fact that it was impossible to give adequate food to the ordinary population of Petrograd and Moscow, the Government decided that at any rate the men employed on important public work should be sufficiently nourished to preserve their efficiency. It is a gross libel to say that the Communists, or even the leading People's Commissaries, live luxurious lives according to our standards; but it is a fact that they are not exposed, like their subjects, to acute hunger and the weakening of energy that accompanies it. No tone can blame them for this, since the work of government must be carried on; but it is one of the ways in which class distinctions have reappeared where it was intended that they should be banished. I talked to an obviously hungry working man in Moscow, who pointed to the Kremlin and remarked: "In there they have enough to eat." He was expressing a widespread feeling which is fatal to the idealistic appeal that Communism attempts to make.

Owing to unpopularity, the Bolsheviks have had to rely upon the army and the Extraordinary Commission, and have been compelled to reduce the Soviet system to an empty form. More and more the pretence of representing the proletariat has grown threadbare. Amid official demonstrations and processions and meetings the genuine proletarian looks on, apathetic and disillusioned, unless he is possessed of unusual energy and fire, in which case he looks to the ideas of syndicalism or the I.W.W. to liberate him from a slavery far more

complete than that of capitalism. A sweated wage, long hours, industrial conscription, prohibition of strikes, prison for slackers, diminution of the already insufficient rations in factories where the production falls below what the authorities expect, an army of spies ready to report any tendency to political disaffection and to procure imprisonment for its promoters--this is the reality of a system which still professes to govern in the name of the proletariat.

At the same time the internal and external peril has necessitated the creation of a vast army recruited by conscription, except as regards a Communist nucleus, from among a population utterly weary of war, who put the Bolsheviks in power because they alone promised peace. Militarism has produced its inevitable result in the way of a harsh and dictatorial spirit: the men in power go through their day's work with the consciousness that they command three million armed men, and that civilian opposition to their will can be easily crushed.

Out of all this has grown a system painfully like the old government of the Tsar--a system which is Asiatic in its centralized bureaucracy, its secret service, its atmosphere of governmental mystery and submissive terror. In many ways it resembles our Government of India. Like that Government, it stands for civilization, for education, sanitation, and Western ideas of progress; it is composed in the main of honest and hard-working men, who despise those whom they govern, but believe themselves possessed of something valuable which they must communicate to the population, however little it may be desired.

Like our Government in India, they live in terror of popular risings, and are compelled to resort to cruel repressions in order to preserve their power. Like it, they represent an alien philosophy of life, which cannot be forced upon the people without a change of instinct, habit, and tradition so profound as to dry up the vital springs of action, producing listlessness and despair among the ignorant victims of militant enlightenment. It may be that Russia needs sternness and discipline more than anything else; it may be that a revival of Peter the Great's methods is essential to progress. From this point of view, much of what it is natural to criticize in the Bolsheviks becomes defensible; but this point of view has little affinity to Communism. Bolshevism may be defended, possibly, as a dire discipline through which a backward nation is to be rapidly industrialized; but as an experiment in Communism it has failed.

There are two things that a defender of the Bolsheviks may say against the argument that they have failed because the present state of Russia is bad. It may be said that it is too soon to judge, and it may be urged that whatever failure there has been is attributable to the hostility of the outside world.

As to the contention that it is too soon to judge, that is of course undeniable in a sense. But in a sense it is always too soon to judge of any historical movement, because its effects and developments go on for ever. Bolshevism has, no doubt, great changes ahead of it. But the last three years have afforded material for some judgments, though

more definitive judgments will be possible later. And, for reasons which I have given in earlier chapters, I find it impossible to believe that later developments will realize more fully the Communist ideal. If trade is opened with the outer world, there will be an almost irresistible tendency to resumption of private enterprise. If trade is not re-opened, the plans of Asiatic conquest will mature, leading to a revival of Yenghis Khan and Timur. In neither case is the purity of the Communist faith likely to survive.

As for the hostility of the Entente, it is of course true that Bolshevism might have developed very differently if it had been treated in a friendly spirit. But in view of its desire to promote world-revolution, no one could expect--and the Bolsheviks certainly did not expect--that capitalist Governments would be friendly. If Germany had won the war, Germany would have shown a hostility more effective than that of the Entente. However we may blame Western Governments for their policy, we must realize that, according to the deterministic economic theory of the Bolsheviks, no other policy was to be expected from them. Other men might have been excused for not foreseeing the attitude of Churchill, Clemenceau and Millerand; but Marxians could not be excused, since this attitude was in exact accord with their own formula.

We have seen the symptoms of Bolshevik failure; I come now to the question of its profounder causes.

Everything that is worst in Russia we found traceable to the collapse of industry. Why has industry collapsed so utterly? And would it collapse equally if a Communist revolution were to occur in a Western country?

Russian industry was never highly developed, and depended always upon outside aid for much of its plant. The hostility of the world, as embodied in the blockade, left Russia powerless to replace the machinery and locomotives worn out during the war. The need of self-defence compelled the Bolsheviks to send their best workmen to the front, because they were the most reliable Communists, and the loss of them rendered their factories even more inefficient than they were under Kerensky. In this respect, and in the laziness and incapacity of the Russian workman, the Bolsheviks have had to face special difficulties which would be less in other countries. On the other hand, they have had special advantages in the fact that Russia is self-supporting in the matter of food; no other country could have endured the collapse of industry so long, and no other Great Power except the United States could have survived years of blockade.

The hostility of the world was in no way a surprise to those who made the October revolution; it was in accordance with their general theory, and its consequences should have been taken into account in making the revolution.

Other hostilities besides those of the outside world have been

incurred by the Bolsheviks with open eyes, notably the hostility of the peasants and that of a great part of the industrial population. They have attempted, in accordance with their usual contempt for conciliatory methods, to substitute terror for reward as the incentive to work. Some amiable Socialists have imagined that, when the private capitalist had been eliminated, men would work from a sense of obligation to the community. The Bolsheviks will have none of such sentimentalism. In one of the resolutions of the ninth Communist Congress they say:

> Every social system, whether based on slavery, feudalism, or capitalism, had its ways and means of labour compulsion and labour education in the interests of the exploiters.
>
> The Soviet system is faced with the task of developing its own methods of labour compulsion to attain an increase of the intensity and wholesomeness of labour; this method is to be based on the socialization of public economy in the interests of the whole nation.
>
> In addition to the propaganda by which the people are to be influenced and the repressions which are to be applied to all idlers, parasites and disorganizers who strive to undermine public zeal--the principal method for the increase of production will become the introduction of the system of compulsory labour.

> In capitalist society rivalry assumed the character of competition and led to the exploitation of man by man. In a society where the means of production are nationalized, labour rivalry is to increase the products of labour without infringing its solidarity.
>
> Rivalry between factories, regions, guilds, workshops, and individual workers should become the subject of careful organization and of close study on the side of the Trade Unions and the economic organs.
>
> The system of premiums which is to be introduced should become one of the most powerful means of exciting rivalry. The system of rationing of food supply is to get into line with it; so long as Soviet Russia suffers from insufficiency of provisions, it is only just that the industrious and conscientious worker receives more than the careless worker.

It must be remembered that even the "industrious and conscientious worker" receives less food than is required to maintain efficiency.

Over the whole development of Russia and of Bolshevism since the October revolution there broods a tragic fatality. In spite of outward success the inner failure has proceeded by inevitable stages--stages which could, by sufficient acumen, have been foreseen from the first.

By provoking the hostility of the outside world the Bolsheviks were forced to provoke the hostility of the peasants, and finally the hostility or utter apathy of the urban and industrial population. These various hostilities brought material disaster, and material disaster brought spiritual collapse. The ultimate source of the whole train of evils lies in the Bolshevik outlook on life: in its dogmatism of hatred and its belief that human nature can be completely transformed by force. To injure capitalists is not the ultimate goal of Communism, though among men dominated by hatred it is the part that gives zest to their activities. To face the hostility of the world may show heroism, but it is a heroism for which the country, not its rulers, has to pay the price. In the principles of Bolshevism there is more desire to destroy ancient evils than to build up new goods; it is for this reason that success in destruction has been so much greater than in construction. The desire to destroy is inspired by hatred, which is not a constructive principle. From this essential characteristic of Bolshevik mentality has sprung the willingness to subject Russia to its present martyrdom. It is only out of a quite different mentality that a happier world can be created.

And from this follows a further conclusion. The Bolshevik outlook is the outcome of the cruelty of the Tsarist régime and the ferocity of the years of the Great War, operating upon a ruined and starving nation maddened into universal hatred. If a different mentality is needed for the establishment of a successful Communism, then a quite different conjuncture must see its inauguration; men must be persuaded

to the attempt by hope, not driven to it by despair. To bring this about should be the aim of every Communist who desires the happiness of mankind more than the punishment of capitalists and their governmental satellites.

VII

CONDITIONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF COMMUNISM

The fundamental ideas of Communism are by no means impracticable, and would, if realized, add immeasurably to the well-being of mankind. The difficulties which have to be faced are not in regard to the fundamental ideas, but in regard to the transition from capitalism. It must be assumed that those who profit by the existing system will fight to preserve it, and their fight may be sufficiently severe to destroy all that is best in Communism during the struggle, as well as everything else that has value in modern civilization. The seriousness of this problem of transition is illustrated by Russia, and cannot be met by the methods of the Third International. The Soviet Government, at the present moment, is anxious to obtain manufactured goods from capitalist countries, but the Third International is meanwhile endeavouring to promote revolutions which, if they occurred, would paralyse the industries of the countries concerned, and leave them incapable of supplying Russian needs.

The supreme condition of success in a Communist revolution is that it should not paralyse industry. If industry is paralysed, the evils which exist in modern Russia, or others just as great, seem practically unavoidable. There will be the problem of town and country, there will be hunger, there will be fierceness and revolts

and military tyranny. All these things follow in a fatal sequence; and the end of them is almost certain to be something quite different from what genuine Communists desire.

If industry is to survive throughout a Communist revolution, a number of conditions must be fulfilled which are not, at present, fulfilled anywhere. Consider, for the sake of definiteness, what would happen if a Communist revolution were to occur in England to-morrow. Immediately America would place an embargo on all trade with us. The cotton industry would collapse, leaving about five million of the most productive portion of the population idle. The food supply would become inadequate, and would fail disastrously if, as is to be expected, the Navy were hostile or disorganized by the sabotage of the officers. The result would be that, unless there were a counter-revolution, about half the population would die within the first twelve months. On such a basis it would evidently be impossible to erect a successful Communist State.

What applies to England applies, in one form or another, to the remaining countries of Europe. Italian and German Socialists are, many of them, in a revolutionary frame of mind and could, if they chose, raise formidable revolts. They are urged by Moscow to do so, but they realize that, if they did, England and America would starve them. France, for many reasons, dare not offend England and America beyond a point. Thus, in every country except America, a successful Communist revolution is impossible for economico-political reasons. America,

being self-contained and strong, would be capable, so far as material conditions go, of achieving a successful revolution; but in America the psychological conditions are as yet adverse. There is no other civilized country where capitalism is so strong and revolutionary Socialism so weak as in America. At the present moment, therefore, though it is by no means impossible that Communist revolutions may occur all over the Continent, it is nearly certain that they cannot be successful in any real sense. They will have to begin by a war against America, and possibly England, by a paralysis of industry, by starvation, militarism and the whole attendant train of evils with which Russia has made us familiar.

That Communism, whenever and wherever it is adopted, will have to begin by fighting the bourgeoisie, is highly probable. The important question is not whether there is to be fighting, but how long and severe it is to be. A short war, in which Communism won a rapid and easy victory, would do little harm. It is long, bitter and doubtful wars that must be avoided if anything of what makes Communism desirable is to survive.

Two practical consequences flow from this conclusion: first, that nothing can succeed until America is either converted to Communism, or at any rate willing to remain neutral; secondly, that it is a mistake to attempt to inaugurate Communism in a country where the majority are hostile, or rather, where the active opponents are as strong as the active supporters, because in such a state of opinion a very severe

civil war is likely to result. It is necessary to have a great body of opinion favourable to Communism, and a rather weak opposition, before a really successful Communist state can be introduced either by revolution or by more or less constitutional methods.

It may be assumed that when Communism is first introduced, the higher technical and business staff will side with the capitalists and attempt sabotage unless they have no hopes of a counter-revolution. For this reason it is very necessary that among wage-earners there should be as wide a diffusion as possible of technical and business education, so that they may be able immediately to take control of big complex industries. In this respect Russia was very badly off, whereas England and America would be much more fortunate.

Self-government in industry is, I believe, the road by which England can best approach Communism. I do not doubt that the railways and the mines, after a little practice, could be run more efficiently by the workers, from the point of view of production, than they are at present by the capitalists. The Bolsheviks oppose self-government in industry every where, because it has failed in Russia, and their national self-esteem prevents them from admitting that this is due to the backwardness of Russia. This is one of the respects in which they are misled by the assumption that Russia must be in all ways a model to the rest of the world. I would go so far as to say that the winning of self-government in such industries as railways and mining is an essential preliminary to complete Communism. In England, especially,

this is the case. The Unions can command whatever technical skill they may require; they are politically powerful; the demand for self-government is one for which there is widespread sympathy, and could be much more with adequate propaganda; moreover (what is important with the British temperament) self-government can be brought about gradually, by stages in each trade, and by extension from one trade to another. Capitalists value two things, their power and their money; many individuals among them value only the money. It is wiser to concentrate first on the power, as is done by seeking self-government in industry without confiscation of capitalist incomes. By this means the capitalists are gradually turned into obvious drones, their active functions in industry become nil, and they can be ultimately dispossessed without dislocation and without the possibility of any successful struggle on their parts.

Another advantage of proceeding by way of self-government is that it tends to prevent the Communist régime, when it comes, from having that truly terrible degree of centralization which now exists in Russia. The Russians have been forced to centralize, partly by the problems of the war, but more by the shortage of all kinds of skill. This has compelled the few competent men to attempt each to do the work of ten men, which has not proved satisfactory in spite of heroic efforts. The idea of democracy has become discredited as the result first of syndicalism, and then of Bolshevism. But there are two different things that may be meant by democracy: we may mean the system of Parliamentary government, or we may mean the participation of the

people in affairs. The discredit of the former is largely deserved, and I have no desire to uphold Parliament as an ideal institution. But it is a great misfortune if, from a confusion of ideas, men come to think that, because Parliaments are imperfect, there is no reason why there should be self-government. The grounds for advocating self-government are very familiar: first, that no benevolent despot can be trusted to know or pursue the interests of his subjects; second, that the practice of self-government is the only effective method of political education; third, that it tends to place the preponderance of force on the side of the constitution, and thus to promote order and stable government. Other reasons could be found, but I think these are the chief. In Russia self-government has disappeared, except within the Communist Party. If it is not to disappear elsewhere during a Communist revolution, it is very desirable that there should exist already important industries competently administered by the workers themselves.

The Bolshevik philosophy is promoted very largely by despair of more gradual methods. But this despair is a mark of impatience, and is not really warranted by the facts. It is by no means impossible, in the near future, to secure self-government in British railways and mines by constitutional means. This is not the sort of measure which would bring into operation an American blockade or a civil war or any of the other catastrophic dangers that are to be feared from a full-fledged Communist revolution in the present international situation. Self-government in industry is feasible, and would be a great step

towards Communism. It would both afford many of the advantages of Communism and also make the transition far easier without a technical break-down of production.

There is another defect in the methods advocated by the Third International. The sort of revolution which is recommended is never practically feasible except in a time of national misfortune; in fact, defeat in war seems to be an indispensable condition. Consequently, by this method, Communism will only be inaugurated where the conditions of life are difficult, where demoralization and disorganization make success almost impossible, and where men are in a mood of fierce despair very inimical to industrial construction. If Communism is to have a fair chance, it must be inaugurated in a prosperous country. But a prosperous country will not be readily moved by the arguments of hatred and universal upheaval which are employed by the Third International. It is necessary, in appealing to a prosperous country, to lay stress on hope rather than despair, and to show how the transition can be effected without a calamitous loss of prosperity. All this requires less violence and subversiveness, more patience and constructive propaganda, less appeal to the armed might of a determined minority.

The attitude of uncompromising heroism is attractive, and appeals especially to the dramatic instinct. But the purpose of the serious revolutionary is not personal heroism, nor martyrdom, but the creation of a happier world. Those who have the happiness of the world at heart

will shrink from attitudes and the facile hysteria of "no parley with the enemy." They will not embark upon enterprises, however arduous and austere, which are likely to involve the martyrdom of their country and the discrediting of their ideals. It is by slower and less showy methods that the new world must be built: by industrial efforts after self-government, by proletarian training in technique and business administration, by careful study of the international situation, by a prolonged and devoted propaganda of ideas rather than tactics, especially among the wage-earners of the United States. It is not true that no gradual approaches to Communism are possible: self-government in industry is an important instance to the contrary. It is not true that any isolated European country, or even the whole of the Continent in unison, can, after the exhaustion produced by the war, introduce a successful form of Communism at the present moment, owing to the hostility and economic supremacy of America. To find fault with those who urge these considerations, or to accuse them of faint-heartedness, is mere sentimental self-indulgence, sacrificing the good we can do to the satisfaction of our own emotions.

Even under present conditions in Russia, it is possible still to feel the inspiration of the essential spirit of Communism, the spirit of creative hope, seeking to sweep away the incumbrances of injustice and tyranny and rapacity which obstruct the growth of the human spirit, to replace individual competition by collective action, the relation of master and slave by free co-operation. This hope has helped the best of the Communists to bear the harsh years through which Russia has

been passing, and has become an inspiration to the world. The hope is not chimerical, but it can only be realized through a more patient labour, a more objective study of facts, and above all a longer propaganda, to make the necessity of the transition obvious to the great majority of wage-earners. Russian Communism may fail and go under, but Communism itself will not die. And if hope rather than hatred inspires its advocates, it can be brought about without the universal cataclysm preached by Moscow. The war and its sequel have proved the destructiveness of capitalism; let us see to it that the next epoch does not prove the still greater destructiveness of Communism, but rather its power to heal the wounds which the old evil system has inflicted upon the human spirit.