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RUSSIA AND OURSELVES

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by

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FOR RUTH
IN LOVE AND FAITH

FOREWORD

THIS SMALL BOOK, has been written in the belief that the tremendous opportunity created by our comradeship in arms with the Soviet Union and by the wave of enthusiasm which is sweeping many sections of the British people (caused by a feeling of relief at our respite and of admiration for Russia's magnificent resistance) must be immediately seized to obtain that permanent and solidly based understanding between the two countries which can come only from a completely honest and realistic approach on both sides.

I deal first with recent Soviet foreign policy, for unless both the Soviet and the British points of view are mutually understood this will be a weapon ready to the hand, as occasion arises, of the powerful forces opposed to permanent Anglo-Soviet collaboration. I turn then to a consideration of the tremendous political transformation which took place on June 22nd, of the hopes it holds out, and of how we may already do something to realize them. There follow some proposals for immediate Anglo-Soviet collaboration, and finally a plea for the revivifying of the socialist movement in this country—it is on the strength of that movement that our relations with the U.S.S.R. will largely depend.

In an Appendix the controversy which a group of writers has been carrying on with the Communist Party of Great Britain since September 1939 is brought to a close, and lessons are drawn from Communist policy, before and after June 22nd, which it is thought may be of some value to the Labour movement as a whole.

V. G.

July 21st, 1941.

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I

THE FIRST NECESSITY

ALL POSSIBLE AID to the Soviet Union.

II

SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY

THE MOST IMPORTANT lesson to be derived from a study of Soviet foreign policy, and with it of British foreign policy, is that neither has the right to throw stones at the other—which is not a bad basis for mutual understanding and respect. The writer sees no reason to modify, in the light of events, what he wrote in *Where are You Going?* (May 1940) and repeated in *The Betrayal of the Left* (January 1941): “In view of the world situation, her foreign policy [the Pact and after] is, in my opinion, to be very greatly deplored, nor can I bring myself to think about the German-Soviet Pact or Finland without dismay: but the motive behind that policy is on the least favourable interpretation no worse, and on the most favourable interpretation infinitely better, than that by which most Great Powers have normally been actuated.”

Broadly, this may be said. From 1934 to the spring of 1939 Soviet foreign policy was of an incomparably higher standard—in realism, firmness, and international morality—than our own. From the spring of 1939 till the morning of Hitler’s attack, it was what ours had been in the preceding period: and this must be added, that Soviet policy since the spring of 1939 was itself largely and perhaps wholly occasioned by Anglo-French policy before that date. Our policy till shortly before the outbreak of war is indefensible from any point of view whatsoever. The Soviet policy since then was justifiable, from a socialist as opposed to a *realpolitik*

point of view, only (i) if it was to succeed in its main objective, that of keeping Russia out of war, and even in that case only on the assumption (which can be honestly held but which I by no means share) that for Russia to keep out of the war in any circumstances except that of an attack on her must ultimately be to the best interests of international socialism, whatever the immediate consequences to the rest of the world, including its working classes. We now know that the Soviet Union has failed, inevitably in a world which holds Hitler, in that objective. Or (ii) alternatively the Pact was justifiable from the socialist point of view if, it having failed to save her from war, she was nevertheless to be in a better position when involved in war than if she had not signed it—but again only on the assumption that this is the crucial consideration, and that what might happen elsewhere in the meantime is completely irrelevant. To the question of this second alternative we shall return.

* * * *

Passionately anxious to keep out of war in order that she might build her society, the Soviet Union did everything in its power, until the spring of 1939 and in spite of disgraceful and sometimes pro-Nazi sabotage on the part of certain ruling elements in Britain and elsewhere, to bring into being a system of collective security which, it is to be firmly believed, would have checked Hitler without war. But what happened in the spring of 1939, after the German attack on Prague, was the final blow to the Soviet hope of escaping war by means of some system, in however modified a form, of collective security. The day by day story of the Soviet efforts, and of Mr. Chamberlain's disgraceful sabotage of them, is worth recalling.

* * * *

The German Army occupied Prague on March 15th. Winding up the debate in the House on the same day Sir John Simon made a firm stand *against* collective security, at the very moment when collective security was clearly the only salvation. He said: "The proposal made by Mr. Eden for a conference of nations in favour of peace was an attractive one . . . but it was necessary to consider what would be the consequences of that policy. . . . Did it mean that we should be committed to an assurance that we would support by force of arms a long and varied frontier? It was really essential that we should not enter into an extensive, general, undefined commitment."

On Saturday, March 18th, the Press published an announcement of a German "ultimatum" to Rumania. The chief feature of this was a demand that Rumania should sell, more or less permanently, *all* her oil, foodstuffs, etc., to Germany, receiving German manufactured goods in exchange: that she should give up completely her attempts to make herself an industrial country, and should devote her whole energies to producing oil and foodstuffs for Germany; and that, if she agreed to this, Germany would "guarantee her frontiers." The implication, of course, was that if she did not agree Germany would not "guarantee her frontiers"—that is to say, would bomb her into submission.

On the same morning the British Government told the Soviet Union that they had reason to fear a German attack on Rumania—and what would be the attitude of the Soviet Union?

The Soviet Union made, in response to this query, a suggestion that should have been acted upon without a moment's delay: they proposed an immediate six-

Power conference (in Bukarest, the Rumanian capital), of Great Britain, France, Poland, Rumania, Turkey and the Soviet Union itself. This proposal by the Soviet Union was in the line of all its efforts to maintain peace since it entered the League of Nations. After the German invasion of Austria in the March of the previous year, M. Litvinov had made exactly the same proposal: if it had been accepted, Munich might never have happened. How had this proposal been received? It had been coldly rejected: it had been called "inopportune": we had been told that it would divide Europe into two camps. Then again in the September of the previous year, when the Czechoslovak crisis was reaching its tragic culmination, Litvinov had renewed his proposal: he had suggested a conference at which there could be a joint declaration, he had urged immediate staff talks, and he had proposed that the whole Czechoslovakian question should be raised at the meeting of the Council of the League of Nations. Again his proposal had been rejected.

But in spite of these rebuffs the Soviet Union, as we have seen, renewed on this Saturday, March 18th, 1939, its proposal for a conference. Next day the Government rejected the proposal and put forward the counter proposal for a "declaration" by France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and Poland—on the ground that things were moving very rapidly and that such a "declaration" would be "quicker" than a conference. Yet it was put about on Tuesday, March 21st, that the Soviet Union's proposal for a conference—the proposal which had been "inopportune" a year ago, and "not quick enough" three days before, was now "premature." This was nonsense, as events were to show. But in any case, what sort of "declaration" was it that the

British Government had in mind? According to *The Times* of Thursday, March 23rd, the declaration was to be "an agreement to consult together in an emergency." In other words, a high-sounding declaration that would mean absolutely nothing. And as the days began to pass it became perfectly clear that this so-called "declaration" simply meant inaction in face of the desperate Nazi menace. Sir John Simon was unable to give an assurance on March 23rd that Mr. Chamberlain would make a statement about the "Declaration" the following Monday—nine days after the Soviet proposal for an immediate conference had been turned down on the plea that a "Declaration" would be "quicker." In the meantime Rumania and Memel had succumbed, and Poland and Lithuania were in dire straits. The *Observer* of the following Sunday wrote this epitaph: "The proposed Four-Power Declaration is dead."

* * * *

And no doubt Stalin read all this—but too rigidly and mechanically, and without giving due weight to other relevant forces and factors in the situation—against the background of the scandalous intrigues which he knew had been going on for years, and which are illustrated by the following entry in *Ambassador Dodd's Diary*, under date May 6th, 1935 :

"Lord Lothian . . . wrote me about this in a letter which I received to-day. . . . He indicated clearly that he favours a coalition of the democracies to block any German move in their direction and to turn Germany's course eastwards. That this might lead to a war between Russia and Germany does not seem to disturb him seriously. In fact he seems to feel this would be a good solution of the difficulties imposed on Germany by the Versailles Treaty. The problem of the democracies,

as he sees it, is to find for Japan and Germany a stronger place in world affairs to which, in his opinion, they are entitled because of their power and tradition. He hopes this can be accomplished without any sacrifice to the British Empire and with as little destruction to human liberty as possible."

* * * *

If the Soviet proposals had been accepted, it is highly probable that there would have been no war : for it is certain that Hitler was determined to avoid a war on two fronts, and every move he has made from that day to this has made that determination more apparent. Some people say that now at last Hitler *is* involved in a war on two fronts. This is not so. The *essence* of the present situation is that he is engaged in a one-front war with the Soviet Union. It was not, indeed, until he had finally sealed off the Soviet Union from outside help, first by the conquest of the Balkans, then by the conquest of Crete, and finally by the arrangement with Turkey, that he turned on his latest prey. In a war of these dimensions, what we can do by bombing the West is irrelevant, *as, but only as, Hitler calculates*. He calculates that he can smash Russia rapidly, and can then turn on us and finish us off before the damage we can do to his war industries in the meantime will have been sufficient to affect the final issue. We, of course, must stake everything on the belief that he has miscalculated and will not finish off Russia as he hopes, in which event the damage we are doing, and may do, will be highly relevant to the final issue. In other words, there is at present no serious war on two fronts, nor will there ever be, if Hitler can help it : but if Hitler has miscalculated in Russia, and if we play our part now—by intensification of bombing, by immediate landings, and by the

building up of our war industries—then there will be a war on two fronts and Hitler will be beaten.

* * * *

When Mr. Chamberlain's incompetence, ignorance, and bitter, narrow, prejudice—and his no doubt still deep desire, not to attack Russia, but to see the German menace directed against her—had brought all Russia's efforts to nought during those March days, Stalin's mind turned finally to that other method of "keeping out of war"—the method of "appeasing" the potential aggressor. It will be many years before we know whether such a possibility had been seriously in his mind for a long time previously: whether, that is to say—as a few allege—some form of combination with Hitler had long had an almost equal attraction for him, in his quest for means of keeping Russia out of war, with the policy of collective security against the aggressor. Our own view is that, though such a possibility had always been at the back of his mind, even during the period of the most violent hostility to Nazi Germany, it did not carry really serious weight with him until the attack on Prague and its aftermath. But then there can be little doubt that it became his determined policy, on which everything was to be staked. It is even questionable whether, during the late spring and summer of 1939, his negotiations with us, carried on while he was also negotiating secretly with the Germans, were seriously intended. It was worth while carrying them on, partly for "pressure" reasons and partly because there was a remote chance that something after all might come of them: but the decision to reach an agreement with Germany, if that were humanly possible, had almost certainly been taken. We do not think that, however great the provocation and however grave the dangers of any alternative

policy, his readiness to come to an agreement with such a "monster" and "cannibal" as Hitler can be considered statesmanlike; but the incapacity and malevolence of our own diplomats during these very negotiations show how grave was the provocation and how great the danger. Their hatred of Russia was such that, even with the final catastrophe in sight, they still could not go whole-heartedly to the goal of a firm arrangement with her, as Churchill was to do two years later. I do not refer to our refusal to give, in effect, *carte blanche* to Russia in the Baltic States. I refer rather to Halifax's failure to go to Moscow when he was specifically invited to do so, to the sending there of a comparatively minor official, to the choice of the slowest route for the military mission when it was decided to send one and when the matter was of the utmost possible urgency, and to the apparent failure to use our influence with Poland in order that she might become a party to a sound military plan.

Actions like these, or perhaps one should say lack of action like this, reinforced the decision, which Stalin had no doubt already taken, to come to an agreement with Germany: for such things increased the suspicion in his mind that what Mr. Chamberlain really desired was to engage in a war of aggression, side by side with Germany, against the Soviet Union, and that he would be able to carry the country with him in this policy.

This conviction of Stalin's may have arisen from several causes: lack of sufficient acquaintance with the main streams of thought outside Russia, too rigid a theoretical approach, and considerable reliance on reports from Communists abroad, with their doctrinaire simplification of the class struggle. It is unquestionably true that, during the whole period which culminated in

Munich, Chamberlain and the appeasers aimed, not at defeating the German menace, but at diverting it from the West to the East : it is highly improbable that, in the period which started with Munich, Chamberlain would have contemplated an attack on the Soviet Union side by side with Germany (but he might have wanted to hold the ring—see later) : it is absolutely certain—there is not a .001 possibility to the contrary—that he could not conceivably have carried the people of this country with him in such a policy (though he might have been successful in a policy of holding the ring—again see later).

* * * *

And so Stalin signed the Nazi-Soviet pact, and entered upon a policy of " appeasement " with Hitler which lasted right up to the very moment when Hitler turned upon him. For in the interests of clear thinking it must be remembered that the pact into which Stalin entered was not merely a neutrality pact, but a pact of neutrality benevolent, in greater or lesser degree at different times during its course, to Nazi Germany—necessarily, for that is involved in appeasement. We do not refer merely to the supply of war materials, which never reached very serious proportions. We refer rather to the diplomatic support accorded by Stalin to Hitler, and so in effect by various Communist Parties throughout the world. For, while there was some variation of tone during the different phases of the conflict, the Moscow thesis, faithfully repeated by Communists here and elsewhere, was that not merely was this an imperialist war for the division of the world's spoils, and that therefore it was a war " in which the working class could take no interest," but that it was a war in which the balance of blame lay

with the democracies. Directly Poland had been conquered, Germany launched a peace offensive : and Russia not merely indirectly, but directly, associated herself with it. We were told, both by the Kremlin and by King Street, that, by refusing to " stop the imperialist war " and make peace with Hitler on the basis of his conquest of Poland, we were showing ourselves to be the aggressors. But what would have happened if we *had* made peace? Read the opening passages of Litvinov's broadcast of July 8th* ; and remember the words of Stalin in his call to the Russian people on July 3rd : " There is no taming German fascism in its savage fury."

* * * *

In his broadcast, Stalin referred to the Nazi-Soviet Pact in the following passage :

" One might ask, how could it have happened that the Soviet Government consented to conclude the pact of non-aggression with such felons and monsters as Hitler and Ribbentrop ?

" Had not the Soviet Government committed thereby a mistake ? Of course not.

" No peace-loving country should reject an agreement with a neighbouring state, even if at the head of that state stand such monsters and cannibals as Hitler and Ribbentrop."

This cannot, as it stands, be seriously intended : if it were, we should have to criticise Stalin on precisely the grounds on which we criticise Chamberlain. For it makes nonsense of international morality and the international organisation of peace. If it is always right to sign a pact with an aggressor, even though the conse-

* See page 112.

quence may be immediate aggression by him against someone else, then Chamberlain was right about "a distant people of whom we know little." Stalin's *real* explanation would no doubt be either that the *Soviet Union*, as the builder of socialism, must always avoid war, or that, if he had not signed the pact, he would have been involved, without any support, in a war with Germany, or even in a war against a Franco-British-German Alliance.

* * * *

It cannot be doubted that—Hitler apart—the Nazi-Soviet pact shares with the "diplomacy" of Western Europe the responsibility for the outbreak of the war. In this responsibility it is the minor partner, because if our diplomats had not defeated the Russian struggle for collective security the occasion for the Nazi-Soviet pact would never have occurred. But, the situation being what it was, the conclusion of the pact, by relieving Hitler of the possibility of a war on two fronts, gave him the signal to go ahead, and made war inevitable.

It is sometimes said that, if the pact had not been made, first, there would nevertheless still have been war, and, secondly, the war would very speedily have become a one-front war between Germany and Russia, in which Russia would have been in the utmost peril. To the second proposition we shall return presently: with reference to the first—namely that, even if the pact had not been signed, there would still have been war—it must be said that this is at any rate problematical. It is quite as probable that, had it not been for the security in the East which the pact gave him, Hitler would have been forced in effect to give way, and so would have sustained his first major reverse. In a word, had it not been for the pact, war *might* have

been averted, and Hitler checked without it : the pact ruled out this possibility, and made war certain.

* * * *

Whether correct or not, Stalin's entry on the path of "appeasement," of "benevolent neutrality" to Germany—which itself would never have occurred had it not been for our own previous policy—rapidly bedevilled the world situation, and was one of the prime factors enabling Hitler to conquer practically the whole of Europe in the space of twenty-one months. Consider the lamentable case of France. What we have said about that country has been frequently misrepresented by Communist critics. We never said, or suggested, that it was the Communists who betrayed France : on the contrary, we made it clear that, as every honest man knows, France was betrayed by (among other things) her own reactionaries. But what we said, and what we repeat, is that the defeatism of the French Communists "objectively assisted"—that is to say, played into the hands of—this betrayal. The real reason for our feelings about the French Communists should be apparent. It is that the French Communists *were the only people who could have saved France*, and by doing so could have transformed the whole European situation, and taken us a very big step on the road to socialism. The French Communists were "defeatist" because Stalin—and here we are considering the inevitable results of the Pact, not whether or not it was correct in all the circumstances to make it—had entered into the Nazi-Soviet pact. If he had not done so, and possibly even if, having done so, he had been able to avoid giving a turn to that pact benevolent to Germany, the French Communists would have been as uncompromising in their defence of France as the

Russians are being in their defence of the Soviet Union at the present moment.

* * * *

The bedevilment introduced by the pact, and by its pro-Nazi twist, was already seen in the case of Finland. We now know from *Pravda*, as we always knew from our own commonsense, that Stalin demanded bases from Finland as a measure of defence against the Nazi aggressors—as a piece of “reinsurance” within the Nazi-Soviet understanding. But because she had set out on the road of appeasement towards Germany, because she must say or do nothing which could bring her into conflict with Germany, she had to make it appear that she was protecting herself from an aggressive alliance between Finland and the “Anglo-French reactionary warmongers” against the security of the Soviet Union. Alternatively, that she was supporting a genuine people’s government in Finland against its reactionary oppressors. The result was threefold : first, the country which we had always looked upon as the very bastion against aggression became—it may have been inevitable, it may have been even on a long view desirable : we shall come to that—an aggressor herself : secondly, Communist supporters and sympathisers throughout the world were given another reason for saying that it was Great Britain and France, and not Germany, that were the most immediate enemies of the Soviet Union : and thirdly Russia by her action played into the hands of a few foolish people who honestly thought that she was as much our enemy as Germany, and must therefore be attacked if the war was to be won, and the greater number of wicked reactionaries here, and more especially in France, who saw in the Russian attack on Finland a heaven-sent opportunity

for "switching the war." Had it not been for the necessities involved in the Russian "appeasement" of Germany, Russia could have told Finland and the world the plain truth—that she felt it necessary, in the interests of her security against "her most malicious and perfidious enemy," to obtain these bases—and she would have had the sympathy of the world instead of the reverse.

* * * *

The trouble about "appeasement," as we know only too well from our own history, is that once you begin it, it is almost impossible to stop. Hitler understands that very well: it is the basis of one of his most interesting excursions in *Mein Kampf*. And so the last possibility of preventing a single-front attack on the Soviet was lost.

For some very considerable time after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet agreement, our handling of the Soviet Union was as stupid and unimaginative, though not as malevolent, as in the years and months and days before the outbreak of the war. But with the sending of Sir Stafford Cripps to Moscow, and particularly after Mr. Churchill became Prime Minister, there was a progressive and notable change on our part. There were still intolerable *niaiseries*, due largely to bureaucrats whose hatred of Russia was the strongest thing in them: and sufficient measures were not used in dealing with such people. There was, for instance, the scandalous haggling over the wretched Baltic gold—at a time when what was at stake was the survival of freedom in the world. Nevertheless, the general tendency of our policy was progressively in the direction of seeking the closest possible understanding with the Soviet Union. This tendency reached its climax before

Hitler invaded Greece, when we made the most determined effort to bring about a combination of Turkey, the Balkan States, the Soviet Union and ourselves. A common land front with the Soviet Union was at that time—and it was the last time—still possible: if we had “brought it off” Germany would not now be conducting “a war on a single front” against the Soviet Union. But that country, forced by the logic of appeasement to continue it, and imagining that by continuing it she might still save herself from war, refused our overtures. Mr. Eden was stating the exact position when he said in the House of Commons on June 25th:

“In every phase in the recent history in the developments of Anglo-Soviet relations we were always retarded by the attention paid by the Soviet Union to the observance of their pact with Germany. Time and again we reviewed the possibility of clearing the path of Anglo-Soviet co-operation of any obstacles which we could, but on every occasion, every time investigation was made, whether the matters were trade or whether they were political, it became clear to us that the Soviet Government were not prepared to negotiate in view of their anxiety not to introduce any embarrassment into their relations with Germany.”

Even up to the very last second, when it was plain to the whole world that a Nazi onslaught on Russia was a ninety-nine per cent. probability, the Soviet wireless and Press still pronounced that such talk was nothing but “provocation” on the part of the enemies of the Soviet Union:

“Even before the arrival in London of Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Ambassador to the U.S.S.R., and particularly after his arrival, the British and, in general, the Foreign Press, began an intense dissemina-

tion of rumours about the imminence of war between the U.S.S.R. and Germany. . . .

“Despite the obvious absurdity of these rumours, responsible circles in Moscow have still found it necessary, in view of the persistent nature of these rumours, to authorise *Tass* to state that these rumours constitute clumsily concocted propaganda on the part of forces hostile to the U.S.S.R. and Germany and interested in the further extension of the war. *Tass* declares: . . .

“According to information in the hands of the U.S.S.R., Germany abides by the provisions of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact as unswervingly as the Soviet Union. Therefore, in the opinion of Soviet circles, rumours of an intention on the part of Germany to tear up the pact and launch an attack against the U.S.S.R. lack any foundation whatsoever, and the transfer now taking place of German troops, relieved from operations in the Balkans, to the Eastern and North-Eastern districts of Germany is connected—it should be assumed—with other motives, having no bearing on Soviet-German relations.”

* * * *

And now we see that, apart altogether from the difficult question of whether this policy would have been correct if it had succeeded in its objective of keeping Russia out of war, it has failed in that objective. Russia is in the war, and has to bear the full weight of the German attack, without any possibility of our being able to form a second front (except in the air and, it is to be hoped, by landings in Europe) to bring her assistance.

* * * *

But, it must at once be asked, if we look at the matter from the point of view of *realpolitik* and of Soviet

interests exclusively (remembering always the tenable, though in our opinion incorrect, view that national-Soviet and world-progressive interests are necessarily in all circumstances identical), is Russia not better off than she would have been had she not signed the pact—even though clearly the pact has failed of its purpose of keeping her out of war? On the grounds that:

1. If Russia had not signed the pact, and war had nevertheless occurred (itself, as we have seen, a problematical contingency), this war would rapidly have developed into a one-front war between Russia and Germany, with Great Britain and France “holding the ring.”

2. In Stalin’s words: “We assured to our country peace during eighteen months, as well as an opportunity of getting our forces ready in the event of Germany attacking our country despite the pact.”

Very great weight indeed must be attached to the first contention. When we remember that Chamberlain was then still in command: when we recall the whole atmosphere of the “phoney war”: when we bear in mind our quiescence, both in the air and on the Western Front: then there was a very real possibility that Hitler, having swept across Poland, would have engaged Russia—while *we* “held the ring.”

On the other hand, there was another, and perhaps equal, possibility. For two or three years the progressive forces had been working up to a crescendo of anti-Nazi feeling. Public opinion had at last forced Mr. Chamberlain to make a stand*—which he proceeded

* This was one element in the situation: another was that British capitalism could no longer afford to ignore the challenge of its German rival. We give the greater weight to the first factor, others will give it to the second.

to do, in the most foolish manner imaginable, by the hasty guarantee to Poland, without a previous understanding with Russia or even any subsequent determination to achieve one. The outbreak of the war showed, in spite of the Nazi-Soviet pact, a terrific determination on the part of the public to put an end to Hitlerism for ever: in France as well as in more than one Balkan country the Communist Party, persecuted though it was, was nevertheless exceedingly powerful: and in Germany itself the amount of underground Communism was still far more formidable than it can be after two years of war. If no pact had been made: if Stalin had come forward as the leader of resistance to Nazi aggression: might it not have been exceedingly difficult for Britain and France to stand aloof, even at the outset, and to "hold the ring"? A campaign unequalled in intensity to anything before known would have immediately arisen, in France, in Britain, in the Balkans, to come to the aid of the great champion of freedom: Hitler's difficulties inside Germany would have been immensely increased: and not only might Stalin not have been left to conduct an isolated war against Hitler, but a great popular movement throughout the world might well have converted a war of defence against Hitler aggression into a revolutionary struggle for international socialism, by whatever name it might have been called.

It is certainly a possibility, therefore, that even at the very outset Hitler would have been faced with a genuine two-front war. But failing this, is it not probable that a two-front war would have developed? Hitler had not then perfected his blitzkrieg methods by the lessons of practice: just as he had been preparing for many years for a totalitarian war of offence, so

had Russia been preparing for many more years for a totalitarian war of defence : in those circumstances, anything like a knock-out blow was unlikely. If Germany had looked like winning, it would have been difficult for any Government here to resist a rising popular demand that Russia should be succoured : and that at a time when almost the whole of Europe was still unconquered.

And if Stalin has had eighteen months to prepare for war, Hitler has had eighteen months' experience, and more, of victorious warfare : he has been able, at the moment of his own choosing and not of Stalin's, to attack Russia on the crest of a triumphant wave : and as a result of his victorious campaigns he has acquired extraordinary perfection in his method of warfare. Austria was, from the technical point of view, a complete failure : Prague, not much of a success : Poland, a try-out for the real thing. In Holland, Belgium and France, blitzkrieg was approaching the summit of its filthy skill. But Greece was the climax : the campaign in that country showed that the last detail of co-ordination in attack had been finally perfected. It is such a war that Hitler has now forced on the peaceful people of the Soviet Union. Whether Stalin or Hitler has gained more by the period of waiting—Stalin by preparation, or Hitler by victorious practice—it is impossible to say.

Finally, in weighing up the various risks involved in the various courses of action, we must bear in mind that it now *must* be essentially a one-front war for the Soviet Union in the initial period at least, whereas in 1939 this was only one of the possibilities. It is a one-front war because Europe has been completely subjugated : and the subjugation of Europe was itself made

far easier by the pact, which gave Hitler the power to wage one-front war against the rest of Europe. It must be added that if Great Britain had been knocked out and America had gone "isolationist"—and both these results would have occurred if Communist policy had succeeded in winning the necessary measure of support—what is now a one-front war for the Soviet Union during the first terrible months would have been a one-front war permanently.

* * * *

What it all seems to come to is this. From the point of view of *realpolitik*, the *risk* to Russia involved in the Nazi-Soviet Pact appears to have been greater than the risk—the very grave risk, when we remember the main lines of our pre-war diplomacy, and the even graver risk as it appeared to Stalin—involved in the opposite course. For while it is impossible to decide definitely whether her position today is better or worse than it would have been if she had signed however unsatisfactory a pact with us instead of with the Nazis, and even if then the worst possibility had happened: whether, that is to say, the four crucial facts—that she has had eighteen months to prepare, that now at any rate we are whole-heartedly ready to help her, that our strength is incomparably greater than it then was, and that America is now more or less "in"—outweigh or otherwise the three equally crucial facts—that Hitler has had eighteen months of victorious warfare, that in the initial period this must be a one-front war, and that Europe has been almost completely conquered: though it is impossible to decide this, nevertheless one thing is certain. If we had been knocked out (and America consequently in isolation) then, when Hitler had come to make his attack on Russia with a conquered world

behind him, her peril would have been more extreme than in any other conceivable circumstances. In the final analysis, that is the risk, from the *realpolitik* point of view, which the Nazi-Soviet Pact involved, just as its risk, from the international socialist point of view, was that the whole world would be conquered by Fascism. And it was by a miracle that we survived. Just as Russia, attacked by Hitler and defending herself against him, is helping to save us now, so, when we stuck to it during those long and terrible months, we were helping to save her.

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There is one final question. Once given the existence of the Nazi-Soviet Pact (whether or not Stalin was correct in signing it) and of the situation that followed, was the occupation of strategic points—Poland, Finland, the Baltic States, Bessarabia (apart from any question of reasons given or methods employed) justifiable? The question is one of the utmost difficulty. I have always held that aggression of any kind cannot be condoned, whatever its motive, and even if it takes place when the territories involved are potentially in the war zone. I feel that still: it is difficult to see how we are to begin the building of a system of international law unless, in whatever circumstances, we steadily set our faces against aggression. I feel, too, as strong a sympathy and admiration when I look back on the heroic Finnish defence as I did at the time, even to-day when Finland is lined up with Hitler. And yet . . . It seems probable that Russia's occupation of these territories has been of great value to her in stemming Hitler's advance. Some deny this, on the ground that within quite a few days Germany was through the old Russian frontier: but the point is that the first

great wave of her attack was expended in getting there, and that a checking of her second wave might even be the beginning of the end. Had her attack started at the old Russian frontier she might now already have been in Leningrad, Kiev, and Moscow; and the outlook might be very different from what it will be even if her second wave takes her to those places. And so we must ask ourselves: if historians will see, as they may see, that it was Russia's action in Finland and elsewhere that turned out to be a contribution to Hitler's final defeat perhaps hardly less decisive than Mr. Churchill's rallying of our own country after the fall of France and the Battle of Britain that followed it, will not our children's children have cause, when all the incidental misery will have passed away and only the broad pattern will be seen, to be thankful for that action? If I am asked, therefore, whether, the pact having once been signed, these Russian occupations were right or wrong, then, hating every species of aggression and sympathising always with any people that is in any circumstances attacked, I must frankly say that I do not know the answer.

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It has seemed desirable to make this survey, because, if our relations with the Soviet Union are to be put upon a really stable basis, self-righteousness and sycophancy must be equally eschewed on both sides. But while the past is important, the present and the future are infinitely more so. Whatever may be the truth about the past (and we have here attempted to do no more than to give, about an exceedingly difficult and complicated situation, the raw material for an interim judgment) the present situation is that the Russians are resisting with superb courage and skill:

that they are showing an understanding of how to counter the blitzkrieg methods which has been shown by no other nation: that the entire population is displaying a truly revolutionary spirit of defence: that this is, on the Russian side, a People's War if ever there was one: and that Stalin's broadcast, whatever may be thought of his reference to the Pact, is a magnificent and uncompromising call to the people of Russia to defend their homeland against the Nazi hordes. To have such an ally, provided always that we do not allow ourselves to sit back and watch, is to draw a great new draught of inspiration for the common struggle. The heart of every progressive in this country beats at one with the heart of every Russian worker and Russian peasant. With the Soviet Government, in its hour of trial, we proclaim our complete and uncompromising solidarity: to the Russian people we send a message of heartfelt affection and indomitable hope.

III

THE TRANSFORMATION OF
JUNE 22ND

THE FACT THAT Great Britain and the Soviet Union are now fighting side by side against a common enemy, and that the United States is supporting this common fight, transforms the world situation so completely that we may now have hopes for the future which would have seemed fantastic even a couple of months ago.

The three salient factors in the situation are the following: first, that the state with which we are fighting side by side is a socialist state, and one of immense power and almost illimitable resources: secondly, the very fact that we are fighting side by side can and must be made to imply an equal voice for the partners in the reorganisation of the world that will arise out of the war: thirdly, our community in arms can and must be made to lead to a greater understanding and less suspicion on both sides, to the end that the co-operation of the two nations in a world at peace may at last become possible.

Let us briefly consider these three points.

1. One of the most powerful partners in what Stalin has called "the united front" against Hitler is, now, the only socialist state in the world. At one stroke the situation has been clarified. It was always true that the choice for the world, in this era, lay with one of only two alternatives—Fascism on the one hand or Socialism on the other. What was implicit now becomes much more explicit: and the fight of socialist Russia against

Nazi Germany gives enormous impetus to the general world fight of Socialism against Fascism, and so holds out not merely a hope, but something like a certainty, that it is to socialism that the victory will go.

But, it may be objected, is the Soviet Union socialist ?

It is socialist in foundation and in ultimate intention, but not in actual day-by-day practice so far as the two main essentials of socialism are concerned—freedom of the individual in many of its aspects, and a high general standard of living.

It is socialist in foundation, because in the Soviet Union alone has the *sine qua non* of socialism been effected—the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. It is sometimes said that the Soviet Union is no longer socialist in foundation, because “ classes ” have again made their appearance. This is undoubtedly true, in the sense that classes with special privileges have sprung up : and it is probably true also that there is such a differentiation in payments as between the “ classes ” as to make the Soviet Union anything but an “ egalitarian ” society. But true though this is, it is also true that not only was the class that could exploit its fellow men by the ownership of the means of production abolished by the revolution, but that it has shown no signs of making its reappearance. The economic ground-work of revolution, so to speak, remains untouched.

This is a consideration of supreme importance. The world of 1941 has the good fortune to be a world in a vast portion of which, owing to an occurrence twenty-four years ago, there are the firm foundations on which a communist society can be built. Whether or not, or in

what circumstances, if any, violent revolution is itself desirable is irrelevant for the present argument. I have myself come to believe more and more that the evils which follow from it are so great that our aim must be a hard struggle to achieve socialism without it. Violent revolution was necessary in the Russia of 1917: in Britain with its stable institutions, and in the absence of defeat (which would mean not Communism but Fascism) it can almost certainly be avoided. But what is important now is, not that the foundations of socialism were laid in a manner that is inapplicable to Britain, but that they have been laid and are there.

The abolition of the private ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange is, however, the foundation of socialism only. (Not that "only" is a happy word: the first step is the most difficult.)

A socialist society is above all a *free* society: a society in which every man and woman can freely develop his or her personality: a society in which there is economic, political, cultural and intellectual freedom: a society of liberty, equality and fraternity: a society, in a word, in the life and institutions of which the liberal tradition becomes embodied as a reality. Such a society cannot be built on a capitalist foundation: its pre-requisite is the abolition of private profit-making. But it is in order that a free and egalitarian and fraternal society may be built, and not for its own sake, that the economic revolution must be effected.

Just as the Soviet Union is socialist in foundation—in the fact, that is to say, that the economic revolution has taken place—so it is socialist in ultimate intention, in the sense that latent in it is the drive to create a true socialist society of the type we have described. The vision of such a society is what has inspired all socialist

doctrine, Marxist or otherwise : and the masses in the Soviet Union are impregnated with that doctrine.

It is because the Soviet Union is still socialist, both in foundation and in ultimate intent, that even at the times when she has been open to the gravest criticism (just as we have been in other ways) she has always remained one of the supreme hopes for the world. But it must be equally insisted that in much day-by-day practice she is anything but socialist. Whether or not these things have been inevitable in Russian conditions, and whether or not any alternative would have involved an even higher ultimate price, nevertheless the progressive consolidation of dictatorship, the steady diminution of political democracy, the absence of many kinds of personal freedom (though the enhancement of other kinds), the ears and eyes and hands of the G.P.U., the canalisation of " thought " and opinion into stereotyped and dictated forms—these things are the very antithesis of socialism, as all socialists before 1917, and not least Karl Marx, understood the term. Indeed, while it is true that the Soviet Union is, in foundation and in intention, the only socialist state, it is in much of its daily practice far less socialist (though in much also far more so) than such a capitalist democracy as our own.

This unsocialist practice is, of course, a direct result of Marx's doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as interpreted, or misinterpreted, by Lenin (both views are tenable) in the light of what he felt to be, and probably were, the necessities of the Russian situation. The professional revolutionaries, seizing power " on behalf of " the workers and peasants, were then faced with the task of building the socialist society. Such a gigantic task implied rigid control by the group that had seized power. Theoretically, this control would progressively

diminish : the state would "wither away." But it seems highly doubtful whether in practice this is possible : all the evidence seems to show that, once a dictatorship has established itself, it progressively becomes more and more totalitarian.* And not only so : the ideology itself may change, until totalitarianism, from being a necessary evil on the way to a liberal end, may become sanctified as itself the final good. The liberty of the individual, in the quite old-fashioned and supremely precious liberal sense, remains theoretically the goal of the main stream of Marxist thought—and Marxism is the "ideology" of the Soviet Union : but it is by no means infrequent to hear Communists—both inside and outside the Soviet Union—sneer at and deride the very idea of individual freedom.

There is, therefore, a real risk that the "transition" which we have been witnessing in the Soviet Union, with its many unsocialist and indeed antisocialist features, might not in fact be a transition to socialism, but might itself become stabilised as the more or less permanent shape of Soviet society. We do not think this probable because, given the whole general character of the socialist tradition, the urge for freedom is likely somehow to become effective ; and even if it didn't, Soviet totalitarianism would still be immensely preferable to the hopeless misery of the masses in, for instance, Poland and the Balkans. In any case, while it would be inexcusable to run this risk in a country, such as ours, where it is quite unnecessary, nevertheless what must weigh with us most, in considering the potential Russian contribution to the world, rather than the contribution which we ourselves wish to make, is not so much the

* But totalitarian with a totally different implication from that of Nazi totalitarianism, the whole *aim* of which is slavery

risk to which we have referred, but rather the firm hope—and what illimitable horizons it opens up!—that what we have described as the drive for real socialism latent in the Russian workers and peasants may arrive, on the basis of the socialist foundation which has been laid in Russia and Russia alone, at the desired goal.

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But the illiberalism of much Russian practice is to be explained not only by the circumstances of the seizure of power: it is to be explained also—and so is the failure yet to achieve a high general standard of living—by the incredibly heroic decision to complete the industrialisation of a vast backward territory in a few years (as against the minimum of a century in capitalist countries), and to do so in a hostile world. This meant a huge expansion of capital goods (swollen also by the need for arming to the teeth) at the expense of consumption goods: a very hard life in consequence for the mass of the population: and, for both reasons, the kind of imposed discipline from above to below that we associate with a desperate war situation, rather than a normal peace one.

The necessity for rigid discipline from above, if the programme was to be carried through with the lightning speed decided upon (a discipline involving, in a relatively backward country, something like a total regimentation of opinion, for in war it may be a crime not only to disobey, but even to criticise and even to oneself, the command of a superior officer) reinforced, and was itself reinforced by, the psychological urge to retain power, and to make it ever more absolute, that operates on all men who are in possession of it. If there were two alternative policies, and if the ruling group was to secure rapid and enthusiastic action from the

masses in favour of its own policy, that policy had to be presented, with all the arts of propaganda, as a matter of life or death, and the alternative as treachery to the revolution. There was this added advantage for the ruling group, that its ordinary human struggle for victory over its rivals was thereby facilitated. One of the results of all this was that the progressive, if however gradual, enhancement of free and independent personality in the population was sacrificed to the speed of industrialisation. This may have been inevitable, if, *in the whole complex of circumstances*, socialism was to be achieved ; the regime may have been correct in considering such speed of industrialisation to be essential, and, in Russia as it was, such speed may have necessarily involved the consequences described. But *in itself* such a sacrifice of all-round human development cannot be desirable, and certainly should not be imitated in countries where socialism may be achieved without what, intended to be a temporary sacrifice, might in the worst eventuality become a permanent one, and so negate the very purpose of socialism itself.*

One thing, however, is certain : without at any rate speedy industrialisation the establishment of a socialist society in the Soviet Union would have been impossible. We said before that the foundation of socialism is the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production. But, indeed, this is only one foundation : another, in such a country as Russia, is industrialisation itself.

* I am indebted for some of the ideas in the last two paragraphs to " The U.S.S.R. : Its Significance for British Labour " by the Socialist Clarity Group, much the best short study of the Soviet Union that I know. The authors of that pamphlet must not, however, be held responsible for anything that is here written.

2. Until the Nazis attacked Russia, the future scene was darkened by a possibility more terrible even than the war itself. There was a danger that the upshot might be either an actual clash between the Soviet Union and the Anglo-American bloc, or an attempt of the Anglo-American bloc to impose a settlement to which the Soviet Union was no party—which would mean no stable settlement at all, and might itself lead to ultimate hostilities.

The second danger no longer exists: any idea of the Anglo-American combination imposing a settlement to which the Soviet Union is not a party is, of course, entirely out of the question. The first danger also becomes, though by no means impossible, more remote. Rigid so-called "Marxists" will no doubt argue that, unless there is an actual Communist revolution in Britain and the United States, an ultimate clash between the Soviet Union and the (at present) capitalist democracies at some date after the war is inevitable. It was "Marxists" of this type who argued that "Churchill" and the "British Empire" *couldn't* support the Soviet Union against Hitler: *must*, sooner or later, line up with Hitler against the Soviet Union. When Churchill made his speech of solidarity, they at first regarded it as a manœuvre; when Stalin accepted it as genuine they showed "disappointment," as Pollitt has "sharply" pointed out in a pastoral letter, because the real world didn't shape up to their theory of how Imperialism ought to act.* But it is the real world, largely directed by the conscious will of men, with which we are dealing.

We do not for a moment believe that the danger of an Anglo-American—Soviet clash need be a serious one—

* See page 120.

if we play our part. There will, of course, be forces in this country that, in their hatred of socialism and Communism, will always desire to destroy the Soviet Union. But there is a great movement of opinion here in Britain: there is a growing knowledge, and with it a growing detestation, of the machinations of monopoly capitalism: there will be, after the war, an even greater will to peace here among the masses of our people than there was before it: and already, in the first fortnight of the war, the Soviet Union has shown such immense powers of resistance that, in spite of short memories, the very idea that British people could be willing to go to war with the Soviet Union at some future date after the end of the present war is inconceivable. As for the Soviet Union itself, she has had for long years now an intense will to peace—a will to peace, indeed, so intense that, as we have described, it has led her on to the path of appeasement. Her task of reconstruction after the war will be such that, if on that ground alone, her will to peace is likely to endure.

* * * *

Nevertheless, the danger of an ultimate Anglo-American—Soviet clash remains—*unless we play our part.* This means, in addition to the building up of mutual understanding—we shall come to that in a moment—a hard and ceaseless struggle to weaken the forces of monopoly capitalism. Though we have had some successes in that struggle, in general we are heavily losing. This is not the place to discuss the method of struggle in the peculiarly difficult circumstances of today; it is sufficient to emphasise the necessity. But over and above any question of the method of struggle, it is necessary to bring about a great revival of the socialist spirit in this country, if

we are to get a movement powerful enough to ensure permanent Anglo-Soviet friendship. We shall return to that in a later section.

* * * *

That the leading rôle in the organisation of the peace should be taken jointly by the British Empire, the Soviet Union, the United States—and I would add China—is a prospect that must bring joy to the hearts of all who care for the future of our common humanity.

We shall all have learned many lessons, and in particular the lesson that the only hope for the world lies in collective security against an aggressor. The struggle which the Soviet Union carried on for this idea so valiantly and for so many years, up till shortly before the outbreak of the war, will once again be waged by her, and this time with success: for the necessity of it, which was apparent to, and passionately urged by, a politically conscious minority in this country, is now apparent to the great masses. Indeed, the entry of Russia into the war, and the victory over Hitler, which in (at worst) however long a run will follow it, may well mean that in future ages historians will see the war as an appalling episode that was necessary before the false starts and imperfect attempts at collective security made between 1918 and 1939 could at last be crowned with complete success.

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There is another reason why the new situation holds out hopes of a peace settlement altogether better and more permanent than we had dared to hope. Mr. Chamberlain, when the war broke out, stated that this was not a war against the German people: we left socialists have urged time and again that it is war *for*

the German people: there is an extremely powerful body of opinion in this country which is of the same view: and, so far as we are aware, there has been no official pronouncement by any prominent member of the Government which has explicitly spoken in the terms of Vansittart's *Black Record*. Nevertheless, there are very powerful forces in this country who desire the destruction, not merely of the Nazi regime, but of "Germany"; and there was always a danger that, if we won the war, these forces might prove triumphant. That is no longer a possibility. Stalin said in explicit terms in his broadcast that the war was not only for the Russian people, but for the German people also: and there is not the smallest doubt but that he meant it. It is absolutely certain that the whole Soviet weight will be thrown into the balance against any repetition of Versailles.

We would urge that even now it is not a moment too soon to begin exchanging ideas with Moscow. It is nonsense to say that "nothing matters" but winning the war—though it is true to say that, if we lost the war, then nothing indeed would matter. We wage the war because we want peace: and it is into the peace that the war will insensibly merge. We are comrades in arms with the Soviet Union: we must be comrades in the peace also. And now is the time to establish political, as well as military, contact. There could be no finer intermediary for this purpose, in the first instance, than our Ambassador in Moscow, Sir Stafford Cripps. For he is that very rare combination—a man with his roots deep in England, a passionate internationalist, and a level-headed sympathiser with the Soviet Union.

On what lines should Socialists themselves be thinking, when considering the next stage of world development? In terms, it is tentatively suggested, of three great Unions: an enlarged U.S.S.R. (therein lies the greatest hope, for instance, for the Balkans), a Union of Western Democratic Socialist Republics, and Anglo-America. In some such conception lies the way forward.

3. But if our future world partnership is to be facilitated, not only must there be official discussion of war and peace problems, but the opportunity given by our partnership in arms for growing mutual understanding and less mutual suspicion on the part of the masses in both countries must be exploited to the full. It is our own side of this business which must here concern us: but the Russian side—a better understanding of us by her—is also of the first importance.

We believe that the foremost necessity in this regard is a sympathetic, but completely honest, interpretation of the Soviet Union to our own people. The kind of propaganda which suggests that everything in the Soviet Union is good—propaganda that some of us were guilty of, in greater or less degree, before the war, in our desperate anxiety to form a bloc with the Soviet Union to prevent the war occurring at all—is not only intrinsically to be deplored, as being false, but is also a tactical blunder: and this is doubly true if it is coupled with propaganda which suggests that everything in Britain is bad. Such propaganda, besides being deeply insulting to the Soviet Union—for it really springs from an unconscious conviction that the whole truth will not bear the light of day—does the greatest disservice to the supremely important cause of Anglo-

Soviet friendship: for it ends by causing, not understanding, but incredulity and irritation.

It is exceedingly important to explain the economic revolution that has taken place in the Soviet Union, and why such a revolution, however different our own methods might and should be (for our own circumstances are different), is an indispensable preliminary for the kind of life which an ever-increasing number of people in this country is, as a result of the war, demanding. It is no less important to describe the industrialisation, the planned production, the mechanised agriculture which have been built in a very backward country on the basis of that revolution, and which (even if, for a number of reasons, the problem of achieving a high general standard of living has not yet been solved) are an almost miraculous vindication of the main contention of socialists. And it is vital also to make clear that, whatever evils there may be (and are) in present-day Russia, there is the potentiality there of a drive towards freedom—and of a freedom incomparably richer and more universal than can be possible in even the most developed capitalist country—whereas the Nazi drive is not merely potentially, but actually, towards slavery.

At the same time, both for the sake of the world's future, and because lies may carry conviction for a day or a month or a year, but cannot do so for ever, the evils must by no means be brushed aside. To pretend that what is not even remotely a democracy is "really" the truest democracy that the world has ever seen: to assert that the Soviet press is "really" free, on the ground that freedom of the press consists in writing what is in the interests of the working class, and the Soviet Government knows what is in the interests of the

working class and tells the press to print it : to pretend that " in the socialist Fatherland " not to deviate from official doctrine is the most complete freedom of opinion—all such hypocrisies and falsehoods must be utterly abandoned, as utterly as the whitewashing, for instance, of our own misdeeds, the more flagrant in comparison with Soviet practice in this regard, towards " backward " peoples. Ultimately we are fighting for that supreme good, the freedom of personality (and that is the ultimate intention of Soviet Communism too, whereas the intention of Nazism is human slavery) : it is our duty to wage a ceaseless struggle for it, and not to blaspheme by acrobatically pretending that it is really the same thing as its opposite.

We should at the same time explain the background of previous history and previous conditions against which the Russian Revolution occurred : and we should show that many of the things to which we take exception in the Soviet Union are explicable in terms of that history. That is, of course, a very different thing from holding up to admiration evils which, with our own very different, and far more fortunate, history, we should struggle to avoid.

And we should couple with a sympathetic interpretation of the Soviet Union a feeling of joy and pride in what is best in our own country. There is no doubt that, just as bogus socialists have betrayed their socialism by falling victims to the worst sort of patriotism, so have genuine socialists most seriously underestimated the value and appeal of the best sort of patriotism. It is on the basis of our own democracy and liberal tradition that we must build our socialism in this country : the true international society will be a federation of socialist countries, each having its own particular and

dearly-loved socialist culture. The good in the Soviet regime—and it has superb triumphs to its record, many of which put us to shame—is for the world: what we in the West must unequivocally regard as its evils may well have been inseparable from the attempt to establish socialism in that particular territory and in those particular circumstances, and may also well be inevitable features of socialism when it is established in various Eastern European countries. The sane method of advance is not for the socialism of one country to model itself slavishly on the socialism of another, but for each country to establish its own native socialism, and to enter into fraternal relations with all the other socialisms, so that each may learn from all and all from each.

What is wanted on the part of socialists at the present time is devoted work by what must be in effect a new International, whether it is called such or not, and whether or not it is formally organised: an International the non-Soviet members of which, far from being disfigured by anti-Sovietism, on the contrary desire the closest fraternal relations with that country: but all the members of which, Soviet and otherwise, owe their first allegiance (or their second, for their first should be to humanity as a whole) to the popular traditions of their own homeland.

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The whole matter can be summed up in a couple of sentences. The problem of the modern world is to reconcile an economy centrally planned for the public good, with personal freedom. There in the Soviet Union, for all who will see it, is the planned economy, and there too is the drive, the inspiration, the compelling power that come from a common national purpose. Here in

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Britain we have a deeply rooted love of personal freedom, and, when all reservations have been made, a great deal of rough and ready experience of how to achieve it. If both Britain and the Soviet Union can throw their best not only into the peace settlement but into the years and decades and perhaps centuries of fruitful co-operation which, if we are wise, will come after it, then the terror and agony through which the world is passing may be but the prelude to the establishment, in however remote a future, of an abidingly peaceful United States of the World, in which no man shall ever be hungry, and no man ever a slave.

IV

PROPOSALS FOR ANGLO-SOVIET
COLLABORATION

IT MAY BE worth while to suggest some practical steps which might immediately be taken by way of co-operation between the Soviet Union and ourselves. The proposals are designedly such as, after quite short discussion, might reasonably be accepted by both sides : nothing is to be gained at this stage, in fact everything is to be lost, by indulging in impracticable visions. It should be added that, urgent though we think these proposals are, even more urgent is the closest military collaboration.

(1) A joint declaration (not merely a declaration by the two parties separately) that neither party will cease fighting, however things may go and however long the struggle, until the Nazis have finally capitulated. In other words, a combination of Mr. Churchill's " We will fight on the beaches, etc." and Stalin's broadcast, issued over the signatures of the two governments.*

(2) A joint declaration that neither party will, in any circumstances, ever make war upon the other.

(3) A joint declaration that neither party will interfere in the internal politics of the other's country.

This is of the very first importance : nothing would do more to remove suspicions and causes of friction on both sides. The memory of the Allied intervention, and

* As we go to press comes the good news that a declaration has been signed pledging both parties not to conclude a separate peace—which amounts to the same thing.

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the fear of a repetition, have bedevilled Anglo-Soviet relations : and so has the fear of Soviet action to create a Communist revolution in Great Britain.

(4) A joint declaration (on the lines of one of the best passages in Stalin's broadcast) that the war is for, and not against, the German people and that after victory there will be, so far as the German masses are concerned, no peace of revenge.

Such a declaration would not only remove from the Russian mind any suspicions that may linger that ~~the war~~ is essentially, on our side, "imperialist," but would also, by the very fact of its existence, weaken that imperialist camp here which desires the destruction of Germany. (There are two imperialist camps, each with its own special interests. One desires the destruction of Germany, and the other--the "appeasers"--desires the strongest possible Germany : both from capitalist motives.)

(5) A joint declaration in favour of collective security as one of the bases of the peace settlement.

(6) A joint declaration that another basis of the peace settlement shall be international planning for plenty and for the economic security of the individual.

(7) There should be immediate co-ordination of our propaganda to the enemy and occupied countries. The propaganda on which both parties could agree is, not Communist propaganda, but anti-Fascist and "anti-war" propaganda, "anti-war" being used in the sense of opposition to the war which Hitler has forced upon the world, and action within the enemy and occupied countries against Hitler so that the war may be terminated as speedily as possible. This is, in point of fact, exactly the line of the present Soviet

propaganda, which has been superb since the first day of the German attack on Russia. Nothing could have been finer, either in tone or in content, than the message on the Moscow Radio to Erna Kremer, whose husband "fell, shot through the lung, on the Beresina River, when the Germans made four attacks . . . For 18 hours your husband was in our hospital, and he died holding a picture of you and your children in the garden of your home. He was a good soldier, obviously . . . He had two crosses given to him for bravery. But we ask you, Erna Kremer, why was your husband on the Beresina, and what benefit are the crosses to your children? Is it right to go into other people's homes, to kill women and children? Ludwig Kremer did not want to do that. You wrote him in your last letter that you hoped he would soon be home again with you and your children, and that you hoped that peace would come soon. You all want peace, and we all want peace, but Hitler doesn't want it. He wants war. Why should women be made to suffer? Hasn't there been enough blood spilt? But Hitler doesn't know it. . . . Now we are giving you this sad news, and you should tell others that enough blood has been spilt. Do all you can. Your husband was a good soldier."

Nothing more perfect has ever been done in war propaganda: and its perfection consists in its truth.

No less valuable have been the broadcasts by the Moscow Radio giving detailed instructions for sabotage in German munition works: "You need not expose yourself if you follow this advice. We are going to explain to you some tricks which will make everything you produce useless." Or the plea to the French: "Hitler's attack on Russia spells his doom. Help us to bring about his doom as soon as possible. Do not

serve as cannon-fodder to Hitler and his minions of Vichy. Organise sabotage in the factories, damage all ways of communication, railways, telephones, by all possible means, against the invaders, against Pétain, Darlan and Laval." Or the message radioed by two Austrian soldiers: "For whom are we fighting? Certainly not for the freedom of Austria. When Hitler came into Austria he promised us many things. Did he keep his promise? No, a thousand times no. Austrians, do all you can to cripple Hitler's war machine. Austrian railway workers, Austrian armament workers, stop helping Hitler, help yourselves."

This is the kind of propaganda that is, above all, required: and Moscow has shown an instinct for political warfare as sure as its skill in defence by adopting this line of political attack. An agreement for the joint utilisation of all our resources for propaganda of this kind should be at once negotiated.

(8) There remains the vital question of Soviet security. Though it may seem one-sided to single out the problem of *Soviet* security (as against that of ourselves or of any other people) this is not really the case: for it does constitute a special problem. More than twenty nations did attack the infant revolutionary state, because she was revolutionary: and since then at various times forces in the Western democracies have wished to renew the attack. The rigid theory that capitalism in general must attempt to destroy the Soviet Union has dominated Russian thinking since 1917, and this must be taken fully into account.

It would therefore be wise for us here and now to make special provision for the Russian case (over and above the general provision to be made by adopting

collective security as one of the main features of the peace). We could do so by stating publicly and unequivocally that the safeguarding of Soviet security will be considered by us as one of the vital requirements of the peace settlement. At the same time, every opportunity should be taken to smooth the way for talks on the model of those at the Foreign Office between Maisky and Sikorski. As to Finland, the British Labour Movement should use every scrap of its influence with the Finnish Social Democrats to get them to reverse their present policy of collaboration with the Nazis against the Soviet Union: more, we should endeavour to act as intermediaries for a positive discussion between the Soviet Union and the Finnish Social Democrats, with a view to arriving at such an agreement as will lead to the sabotaging by Finnish labour of the Nazi war against the Soviet Union, in place of the present most deplorable collaboration.

* * * *

These few proposals have been set down tentatively, and as a basis for discussion within the Labour Movement. They are offered in the belief that the progressive development of Anglo-Soviet collaboration holds out the greatest hope for the future of the world, and that that collaboration must be firmly and soberly based on mutual respect, and on a determination to satisfy the special needs, and to respect the special characteristics, of both the parties to it.

V

RECREATE THE SPIRIT OF
SOCIALISM!

THE CHARACTER OF the Soviet resistance teaches us a lesson that we shall neglect at our peril. For why have we suffered so many defeats at the hands of the Nazis? We have, of course, been terribly handicapped throughout by our initial lack of preparedness. But when we examine the whole general pattern of the Allies' warmaking from the outbreak right up to the moment of writing—we say the Allies', because the completeness of the French defeat and subsequent defection not only explains, but is itself explained by, the total situation on our side—we find a fundamental defect which has prevented us from repairing our fortunes anything like as completely as we might. Having the best cause that a nation at war has ever had, and in spite of superb episodes that will always be the wonder of the world—the Dunkirk argosy, Mr. Churchill's rallying of the nation last summer, the Battle of Britain, the public behaviour in air raids, to mention only these—*we have not been fighting—not in the diplomatic, not in the military, and above all not in the domestic field (production for profit and not for victory!)—with a revolutionary dynamic equal, not to say superior, to that of the Nazis.* The Russians are fighting with such a dynamic: contrast Stalin's "scorched earth" appeal with our own wretched "stay put in an invasion," and compare, too, the broadcasts quoted in the last chapter, which are "news" in every daily paper, with our own failure to produce anything much that any journalist

sees fit to mention. And unless we fight with a similar dynamic victory will elude us—for however things may actually turn out we must base all our calculations on the belief that this will be a long war, and that it is on us that the final blow will fall—and ours will be the everlasting shame of having betrayed humanity when we had the power to save it.

* * * *

There is no need to underestimate such decent things as there have been in recent Government utterances. There were some good generalities in the opening passages of Lord Halifax's famous speech, afterwards issued as a White Paper; and Mr. Eden's Mansion House address showed a tentative approach, not of course to international socialism, but to some reorganisation of the world's economy in which private profit-making should not be the sole consideration. But in a situation which is no less desperately urgent because the Russians have been attacked—a situation in which the Nazis may at any moment move here or there with lightning rapidity, and will gladly crash a thousand flimsy aeroplanes to destruction if only they can land their men—what is wanted is not a timid and tentative approach, but a whirlwind arising everywhere that will sweep the Nazis back and hurl them to destruction. And only one sort of whirlwind can do it. Any reply to the Nazis which has even the smallest Nazi element in it must fail of its purpose, for a very simple reason: that its dynamic must be weaker than that of the Nazis themselves. We cannot compete with the Nazis in evil.

The only reply to the Nazis that can avail us is the reply of good to evil: the reply of freedom to servitude: the reply of goodwill to ill will: and a reply whole-

hearted, uncompromising, uncontaminated to the smallest degree by the thing to which it is replying.

Consider for a moment the diplomatic situation on which so overwhelmingly much depends. What is the Nazi method? It is to threaten, to bargain, to intrigue, to promise, to bribe: to offer territory: to play off one "interest" against another. And because they *believe* in chicanery, and in the whole nauseating business of power politics, with a youthful fanaticism that even our worst reactionaries cannot begin to equal, the Nazis will always beat us at that game. But there is a game at which they cannot beat us, if only we would play it. We should say in accents quite unmistakable, say repeatedly, say so that everyone everywhere at last would hear: "The Nazis are striving to dominate the world, and to subject all other peoples to them. We, on the other hand, are fighting for a free world. We therefore tell you that we hereby utterly renounce all our special privileges everywhere. Those privileges are a relic of an evil past: Nazism has shown us where that sort of thing leads the world. Henceforth, any bond that may unite others to us must be a bond into which they freely enter." This is what we should say and do, for instance, about India: and it would be as great a contribution to Anglo-Soviet victory as our bombing of the Reich or the creation of a second front, for once we spoke and acted like that the world, already listening to the Moscow broadcasts, would become too hot to hold Hitler and his tyranny. But at present we promise self-determination to Syria, which is not "ours": we do not give it to India, which is.

It would, of course, be ridiculous to imagine that the dominant interests in the Government will speak in accents such as these: they will only do so—they will

only launch this whirlwind abroad—if first a whirlwind arises among the common people at home, and compels them to do so. And there is only one real name for this whirlwind: it is the whirlwind of international socialism.

It is not suggested that, within a sufficiently short space of time, a great crusading movement of the masses, consciously socialist, can arise in this country. But there is at present a widespread hunger, as yet latent, for a new way of life, national and international; and conscious socialists could turn this hunger into an active and overwhelming force, if only they could find the way to do it. And they could do so in time to be effective: the war is not going to be over tomorrow, and meanwhile the Russian resistance gives a respite.

* * * *

But socialism in this country is not a whirlwind, or anything like it. Why?

I profoundly believe that behind and beneath all the mechanical causes—the bureaucracy, the vested interests and the rest—and the economic causes—chief of which is the parasitism of many trade-union and social democratic elements on capitalism—our failure is due to the loss of that evangelical spirit which was characteristic, for instance, of the I.L.P. in the days of its youth. Nothing but a recapture of that evangelical spirit can save socialism in this country: and in the final analysis nothing else can win the war in the way it must be won. For socialism is—let us not be ashamed about saying it—the embodiment of goodness in organised social life: and that alone can beat that embodiment of wickedness in social life which we call Nazism.

It is easy, with or without instruction in philosophy or metaphysics, to discuss the meaning of good, the origin of our ideas of it, its relativity or absoluteness, and its sanction, at endless length. But when all has been said, we see that for practical, everyday purposes the discussion is irrelevant and sterile. Men and women who have reached a certain stage of development in fact *feel*—recognise instinctively as a matter no longer to be disputed—that certain things at least are “good,” and that other things at least are “bad”: and that, above all, love and respect for others are “good,” and that hate and disrespect for others—a disrespect issuing in every species of enslavement—are “bad.” Whatever the reason which explains why we feel these things, we nevertheless feel them: the feeling of them, the not questioning of them, is of the essence of our living. Most philosophical, religious, and metaphysical speculation is motivated by the desire to find a logical reason, or “sanction,” for beliefs which have become for the speculator—though of course they need by no means *be*—aprioristic.

* * * *

But there is another side to the picture. Man is a creature as yet very precariously balanced between good and evil. All that he has won, in his slow progress from the state of a beast, has not so far brought him, except in a few rare cases, anywhere near the state of an angel. More: his gains during the struggle have been, not indeed counterbalanced, but to some extent diminished, by new evils: for instance, most beasts are naturally and spontaneously cruel, whereas some men are deliberately and consciously so.

In this upward struggle, it is not because, in some automatic manner, he has learned to sublimate his

aggressions, to transform them from the destructive into the fruitful, that man has advanced. Rather, it is his recognition of the moral law that has *compelled* him either to restrain his aggressions or to sublimate them : either to keep his evil in check, or to turn it into good. And his recognition of the moral law is due to the environment and climate produced (in the West, to speak only of that) by the hardly won and slowly developed Judæo-Hellenic tradition—by the teaching and practice of Socratism, with its passion for objective truth, and of Christianity, with its belief in the sacredness of human personality, and in the right to freedom, which is the corollary.

This tradition, it must be repeated, is as yet precarious : it has been nurtured with difficulty by the blood of the martyrs and by innumerable tiny thoughts and acts of unknown men and women, and could easily be lost for generations or perhaps for ever. That is why, when we say that Nazism is a menace to civilisation, we are speaking simple and literal truth : this is not the phoney slogan of hypocrites (except in the case of those, as yet few in Britain, who are themselves Nazi) but the cry of men who see, in agony and desperation, that the gains of two thousand years and more are at stake, and are determined that, whatever the immediate cost in blood and torment and treasure, they shall be preserved. If a generation or two of Germans and conquered Europeans, to say nothing of other peoples, were to be conditioned by education and environment to *believe in wickedness* : then the morality from which this immorality is a revolt might well be altogether forgotten, and a new tradition of evil established—until slowly, painfully, and with centuries of progress sacrificed, the upward movement started

once again. That is why, if Hitler were to succeed on the full scale of his ambitions, he would be, not in any vague or mystical sense but as a matter of historical fact, Antichrist.

* * * *

Not only is the "absoluteness" of certain ethical principles unquestionably accepted by the "common sense" of developed men and women brought up in our tradition (which does not of course mean that all or most of them habitually live in accordance with these principles, still less that automatically, so to say, they are prepared to devote their lives to the establishment of a good society), but an appeal to these principles, *if only we will dare to make it, and make it with uncompromising passion*, is incomparably more potent than any other appeal whatsoever. A man will wrestle as Jacob wrestled with the angel to save a child from a burning building at the risk of his life: he will do no more than give up his golf in order to increase his "earnings" on the Stock Exchange. And the ethical appeal means, above all, an appeal to the sense in men and women that the personality of others should be respected: the appeal to liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Those who say that the appeal to self-interest is the most potent of all appeals confuse immediacy with potency. To the majority of men and women the appeal to self-interest is certainly more immediate; but, even for the majority, has it the compelling power of the Sermon on the Mount, when that has once been listened to?

* * * *

In a word, our job is to take the belief in "goodness" which exists in the great mass of ordinary men and women of our tradition, but which is rendered so largely

ineffective by the competing claims of carelessness and selfishness, and to make it actually what it is potentially—the victorious instrument for creating a world-society that the best in us will recognize as “good.” And if we say “the great mass of ordinary men and women,” we do not mean “everybody.” It would be an impertinence, and seem a mockery, to talk in language such as this to those who, for long years, have suffered the extremes of poverty and unemployment: the best we can do is to give them any help that lies in our power in their immediate struggle against a shameful exploitation. Useless, too, to expect aid from at least the majority of those who have been corrupted by a lifetime of excessive wealth and power. “It is harder for a camel . . .” If anyone imagines that we see the solution of our problems in a change of heart among Monopoly Capitalists, he has wholly misunderstood us. There is only one thing to do with Monopoly Capitalism—and that is to fight it.

* * * *

It was said earlier in this chapter that we cannot effectively beat the Nazis by any methods that partake of Nazism, for our dynamic will inevitably be less powerful than that of Nazism itself. Put in another way, we cannot beat Nazism (which is power, and hate, and selfishness) by an appeal, in however modified a form, to power and hate and selfishness. We can beat the evil of Nazism only by the good that is its opposite; and we *can* beat it by that, because it is stronger, being positive, while the evil of Nazism is negative.

That is why the recent growth in certain quarters of a propaganda of hate and threats against the German *people*, and of a determination to identify them with the Nazi Government and machine, is not only a disgusting offence to decency, but is also, even from the immediate

military point of view, utterly disastrous. The Russians, so far as we have seen, have not shown a trace of this spirit: the great broadcast to Erna Kremer is a model of the opposite. But here the *Daily Express* wrote recently:

“ In their apathy and moral cowardice the Germans let the Nazis seize every key position in their country.

They let the Gestapo run their lives for them, they let Hitler do what he pleases with German youth. They give power to a Government that is the worst and most vicious there has ever been.

Nothing can save that Government and nothing can save the German people from sharing its punishment if they continue to support it.”

What wicked and nauseating nonsense! The German people as a whole are to be held responsible because Hitler was able, by cunning appeals to men who had suffered the unspeakable disasters of the inflation and the crisis of '29 to '32, and with the help of the tyrants of German industry, to win sufficient support to fasten his despotism on a despairing country! They are to be held responsible because, when a Gestapo agent had been placed in every street and even in every home, they did not successfully revolt! And they are to be held responsible because *now*, when Hitler's victorious campaigns make revolt both psychologically and materially far more difficult than before, they do not rise up and—with what?—overthrow him! Shall we soon be told that the French people also—first defeated by Germany, and then at the mercy, not only of Hitler, but also of Pétain and Darlan and Laval—are to be punished “ if they continue to support ” their Government?

No less offensive is the self-righteous hypocrisy of language such as this. Apathy and moral cowardice!

What of the apathy and moral cowardice of the people of Great Britain, who year after year gladly suffered a Government which not only "appeased" Hitler, but from time to time actually supported him? If any are in doubt about this aspect of the matter, let them read *Ambassador Dodd's Diary*, and they will get their answer.

And the German people are to be "punished." This is the new world which is to come out of all the blood and sweat and tears which our German comrades, no less than ourselves, are suffering. Well, we tell these gentry that we will not have it. We are fighting for the "punishment" of no one: we are fighting for one thing only: the overthrow and restraint of a wicked tyranny, and the abolition of conditions which made the growth and success of that tyranny not merely possible but well nigh inevitable.

And do not let these wretched hate-mongers dare to suggest that they are more staunch in the fight against Hitler than we are. We of the Left have made it clear a hundred times that we can see no hope for the world unless the Nazi machine is utterly defeated. But we do not find it necessary, having struggled against this same Nazism since 1933 and long before, to prove our determination by screaming that the toy-makers of Rothenburg, or the shepherd whom I once drove in happy days from St. Wolfgang to Mondsee, should be "punished." Perhaps others, with a somewhat different record, feel this necessity.

This sort of propaganda, as we have said, is not only foul in itself: it impedes our victory. That it must rally the German people round Hitler, instead of detaching them from him, is obvious. But it has a disastrous effect also on our own effort. We are not going to rouse the people of this country to maximum enthusiasm by try-

ing to make them hate the Germans : by doing so, we are joining battle with Hitler on his ground instead of on ours. The Nazis can preach brutality and hatred with a dynamic *elan* that is infinitely stronger than anything we can succeed in producing here by the same methods : for, as a matter of plain historical fact, we have developed to something saner. The drive of Nazi hatred is not going to be beaten by a feeble imitation of it ; it is going to be beaten by its stronger opposite. Only when the mass of our people see the war as a crusade to abolish hatred and exploitation and enslavement, shall we be in sight of victory.

Let no one imagine that this is " all vague talk," and has nothing to do with such hard practical necessities as, on the one hand, an immense increase in the production of tanks and ships and aeroplanes, and, on the other, an end to strategic and tactical blunders and to military inertia. On the contrary. Until the masses have the crusading spirit to which we have referred, they will be unable to sweep away the vested interests which are impeding a maximum organisation of the war effort, or to remove the dead hand of bureaucratic, diplomatic, and military professionalism that has brought us, again and again, to the very edge of the abyss.

That Tories—though not the best of them—should use the language quoted is perhaps natural. But what is to be said of Labour leaders who speak as Mr. James Walker spoke in his presidential address to the Labour Party Conference at Whitsun :

" I am not one of those who can separate the German people from the German Government. The German people are just as responsible for the deeds of Germany as the German Government itself " ?



It is not denied for a moment that German psychology will present the world, when the war is over, with a very real problem. A section of the German people, and a very large section of its youth, has been brutalised and degraded to an almost unbelievable degree : in a recently published book by Jon Evans, *The Nazi New Order in Poland*, will be found a record of cruelty and obscenities so appalling that the eye almost refuses to read on—and Germans have been found ready, in sufficient numbers, to commit them. But we shall not make the world a sweeter place by “punishing” those who have been so terribly corrupted—still less by “punishing” those Germans who hate such things as much as we do. Rather must we understand what, immediately, has caused this degradation of our common human nature, and what, a little further back in history, specially predisposed certain elements of a great nation to fall a victim to it : and, having understood, we must help “the good Germany”—the Socialist, the democratic Germany—to see to it that those causes are never again allowed to operate.

* * * *

To return : the vital necessity of the day is to get back the evangelical element into socialism : to present socialism here in Britain (different traditions demand different methods) not primarily as something more efficient than capitalism, nor as the inevitable next stage in historical development, nor as something by which wages may be raised and unemployment abolished (vitaly important though these things are), but as a method of so organising society that *all men* may lead the life of liberty and equality and fraternity which we feel to be absolutely good, whatever may be the ultimate causes of our feeling it. We must see the vision Shelley saw

more than a century ago by the Lake of Como, and must make others see it :

I wandering went
 Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
 And first was disappointed not to see
 Such mighty change as I had felt within
 Expressed in outward things ; but soon I looked,
 And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked
 One with the other even as spirits do,
 None fawned, none trampled ; hate, disdain, or fear,
 Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
 No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
 ' All hope abandon ye who enter here ; '
 None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
 Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
 Until the subject of a tyrant's will
 Became, worse fate, the abject of his own,
 Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.
 None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
 Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak ;
 None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
 The sparks of love and hope till there remained
 Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
 And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
 Infecting all with his own hideous ill ;
 None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
 Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes,
 Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
 With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
 And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
 As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
 On the wide earth, past ; gentle radiant forms,
 From custom's evil taint exempt and pure ;
 Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,

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Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
Yet being now, made earth like heaven ; nor pride,
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
Spoil the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.
Thrones, altars, judgement-seats, and prisons ; wherein,
And beside which, by wretched men were borne
Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
The ghosts of a no-more-remembered fame,
Which, from their unworn obelisks, look forth
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors : mouldering round,
These imaged to the pride of kings and priests
A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
As is the world it wasted, and are now
But an astonishment; even so the tools
And emblems of its last captivity,
Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
And those foul shapes, abhorred by god and man,—
Which, under many a name and many a form
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark and execrable,
Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world ;
And which the nations, panic-stricken, served
With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love
Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless,
And slain amid men's unreclaiming tears,
Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate,—
Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines
The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,

All men believed or hoped, is torn aside ;
 The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
 Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
 Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
 Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
 Over himself ; just, gentle, wise : but man
 Passionless ?—no, yet free from guilt or pain,
 Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
 Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
 From chance, and death, and mutability,
 The clogs of that which else might oversoar
 The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
 Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

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In this task of recreating the socialist movement, Christians and non-Christians may most fruitfully co-operate. The Church has been responsible for many appalling evils during the course of its history : but that does not for a moment affect the fact that at the heart of it, however overlaid and obscured, and however frequently distorted, is the potentially revolutionary teaching of the Christian ethic. There is a great stirring in the Church at the present moment : more and more Christian priests are realising that it is only in a socialist society that the Christian ethic can become a living reality, and that therefore it is the duty of a Christian to devote his life to the creation of that society. For non-Christians to reject Christians as allies, merely because Christians find their sanction for morality in God's existence and nature, and non-Christians do not, is to the last degree frivolous : and the same applies *vice versa*.

* * * *

Some people, who like to think of themselves as "hard-boiled," imagine that there is something woolly and unrealistic about this appeal to ethical motives. On the contrary, it is they who are being woolly and unrealistic. There can be nothing more unrealistic than to ignore how ordinary men and women think and feel : and that is what they are doing. It is not "realistic" to refuse to talk about goodness : it is merely cowardly.

But if we insist on the ethical approach, we must insist no less strongly that to leave the matter there is simply to escape from the stern necessities of our task. The Church has so escaped, often with deliberate counter-revolutionary intent : and that is the heart of its failure. We proclaim that it is good for men to be free and equal and brothers, and that *that* is why we desire to establish socialism : but such insistence, far from absolving us from the duty of using our brains to discover just how the socialist society may be brought into being and of ourselves struggling to bring it into being, makes this mental and political strife the one duty of our lives. What are, indeed, equally wanted among socialists today, if the struggle is to be won, are three things : a passionate love of humanity, a prophetic call to men of goodwill, and a hard examination, in the light of the best available scientific knowledge, of the means by which the desired society may, at last and in our day, be brought into being.

APPENDIX

I. THEORY AND FAITH

II. "THE IMPERIALIST WAR"

I

THEORY AND FAITH

THIS IS A convenient place for bringing to a close the controversy which a group of writers has been carrying on with the Communist Party of Great Britain since September 1939. It is useful to draw lessons from the past that may guide our practice, not merely in the remote future, but in what—all sorts of possibilities are foreseeable—may be for Socialists the immensely critical years and months and even weeks that lie ahead. A sound theory, and a just appreciation of its proper rôle, may make all the difference between triumph or disaster for the socialist movement, and so for the world, in this coming period.

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The initial inspiration of the socialist movement in all countries and in all its phases was not a theory of human history but a passionate and consuming faith. In the case of the British Labour Party this faith was never seriously reinforced by a scientific theory: and the faith itself grew old and tired. The result is that in our own day the steam that drives the Labour Party is not of high pressure, nor is the rudder that steers it firm or sure. To recover the old faith in all its glory is the first necessity; but sound theory is no less important.

International Communism,* on the other hand, has

* The reference in what follows is to International Communism outside the Soviet Union. In the Soviet Union itself the relation of the Communist Party to State Power of course creates a special situation.

never weakened in the intensity of its faith: and the faith was reinforced by a theory—the materialist conception of history, of which the doctrine of the class struggle is the keystone. But the theory transformed the faith: or rather, the theory became merged with the faith, acquiring that emotional and religious sanctity and finality which properly belong to a faith but not to a theory. The theory became the steam, and no longer merely the rudder. The passionate desire for human emancipation is still there—perhaps more passionately there than among socialists of any other kind: but instead of keeping this goal of human emancipation every moment in view, and using the theory to achieve it, what is kept every moment in view is the necessity to adhere to the theory, sometimes in the conviction that thereby the goal of human emancipation will be attained, and sometimes with that conviction partly or wholly forgotten. When the conviction is forgotten, the theory tends to be followed for its own sake exclusively.

The theory of the class struggle is one of the most important findings of human genius: it ranks with the discoveries of Freud, and the two together, when combined with and modified by earlier knowledge, form the most fruitful guide for transforming the relations of men in society that has been revealed in this last period. But the moment any theory, however fruitful, becomes stabilized, the moment it is used as *the* sole explanation of the world instead of as a help in explaining it, and the moment it ceases to be constantly modified, revised and enriched in the light of experience, then it may become, not a rudder that will take the ship to harbour, but one that will drive it on to the rocks and destroy it utterly. Indeed, the ship might be

better off with no rudder at all: for without one it might, slowly and blunderingly and after many wanderings, nevertheless get to port. The proper use of a flexible theory can give immeasurably better results than the instinct of the man in the street: but by the same token the instinct of the man in the street may avoid the perils involved in the improper use of a rigid theory. The Labour Party, for all its many weaknesses, did at least understand, in the gravest crisis of the world's fate, the first necessity—that Hitler must be defeated by force of arms—and did act steadfastly in the light of that understanding.

In actual day by day practice the theory of the class struggle has become for Communists the one explanation of everything that happens. And not only so: again in practice, even the theory of the class struggle itself, even within its own proper limits, has become over-simplified, unitary, unmindful of the many rich varieties of class interest itself. For Communists, during the period from September 1939 to June 1941, Churchill was the representative of "capitalism." But even within the confines of the class struggle theory, the *essential* fact was that Churchill was the representative, not of international monopoly capitalism, but of patriotic national capitalism: and in the real world the *essential* fact (for immediate purposes) was, not that Churchill was a representative of capitalism at all, but that he was a patriot, a hater of what he rightly calls Hitler's "wickedness," and a man with a sense of European culture and European values.

The chief lesson, then, of all that follows is that nothing can be more dangerous than to make the facts fit a given theory, rather than to be constantly revising the theory in the light of the facts. But with this lesson

many others are merged, and they will be apparent in their proper place to the reader, without the necessity of calling special attention to them as they occur. First, there is the self-deception produced by the religious adherence to a dogma which does not explain all the facts: Mr. Ivor Montagu, for instance, who is a very clever man, would not have written, the very day before the German attack on Russia, that there would of course be no such attack, or that alternatively, if the attack took place, it would be by arrangement between Churchill and Hitler, unless he had really believed it. Secondly, there is the more or less conscious deception of others, in order to render the dogma, or a "line," plausible. Thirdly, there is the inability to face consequences: the learned pages of the *Labour Monthly* often conceal that extreme of political frivolity which would lose a world rather than sacrifice a jot or tittle of ideological purity.* Fourthly, there is the use of catchwords such as "Imperialism," "A People's Government" and "A People's Peace," and slogans such as "Stop the imperialist war." The Leninist formulation of imperialism is of supreme value: but the constant and thoughtless repetition of the word has converted it into a piece of debased and almost valueless currency. And that is a disaster; for nothing is more important, even now, even and perhaps especially with the Soviet Union "in," than still to be alive to the basic facts of imperialism. As to "Stop the imperialist war," "A People's Peace" and "A People's Government," no one could ever say just what these phrases meant.

Fifthly, there is what can only be frankly described as the absence of ordinary, common or horse sense; and finally, there is the supposed but erroneous neces-

* See page 129.

sity for following a policy identical with (rather than in support of, which is something very different) Soviet foreign policy.

* * * *

Let the reader now consider, in the light of June 22nd and after, Communist policy during the preceding period.

II

“ THE IMPERIALIST WAR ”

IT SHOULD NOW at last be clear, even to the most rigid doctrinaire, that essentially this is not, nor ever has been, an “ imperialist ” war. The word “ essentially ” should be noted. We have never denied—we have, indeed, repeatedly insisted—that there are imperialist *elements* in this war : that is to say, certain forces in this country, still more in France, and perhaps most of all in the United States, have resisted Hitler or urged resistance to him, from a desire to hold existing markets, or to obtain new ones, or to overthrow a rival capitalism. Moreover, the ultimate origin of the war is to be found in the international clash of competitive capitalisms. It is necessary, indeed, to go on insisting about that : the danger is that the Communists, with their usual tendency to race to extremes at the time of “ sharp turns,” may be inclined to forget all about that aspect of the matter. But in spite of this imperi-

alist element, the whole broad pattern of the war was never "imperialist" in the Leninist sense—and the attack on Russia should make this apparent even to those who could not see it before. The war is, and always has been, essentially a fight between those, on the one hand, who are striving to win world domination, and those, on the other, who are striving to save themselves and others from it. That, of course, is a simplification: to characterise the war adequately requires, not one sentence, but a book of a thousand pages. But it is a simplification which expresses the reality of the matter far more closely than that other grotesque and misleading simplification, to the effect that the war is "imperialist."

Some may attempt, without conscious dishonesty, to bring their attitude since the attack on Russia into harmony with their attitude before it, by differentiating between the German-Russian war on the one hand, and the German-Anglo-American war on the other. This is sheer delusion. The war is one, and it has been going on since 1935, as *Pravda* pointed out in a brilliant article in January 1939. As Hitler aimed at world domination from the beginning, from the beginning it was obvious that, unless he were prevented by "collective security" from making his bid, a world war must result, and that sooner or later every nation of importance must be drawn into it, either as an opponent of Hitler or as a vassal or "appeaser" of him. That the Soviet Union could in any true sense "keep out of" the war was always a fantastic notion: the only question was whether developments would end in her fighting Germany or in her becoming, without fighting, Germany's vassal. To questions like: "Must the war spread?" there has never been more than one answer: the

answer has always been : “ Yes, it must spread—unless and until Hitler is defeated.”

The attack on the Soviet Union at the present stage is a modification of the war plan which emerges from *Mein Kampf* ; and this modification has been necessitated—to mention only the three most important factors—by Hitler’s defeat in the Battle of Britain, our stubborn resistance, and the developing crescendo of American aid. To these, Hitler’s apprehension at Russia’s growing preparedness (“ in case Hitler should break the Pact ” as Stalin has put it) should be added.

One must speak of the war plan as “ emerging ” from *Mein Kampf* because it has to be pieced together from the pages of that tome : *Mein Kampf* was a diplomatic instrument as well as the statement of a plan, and it was essential for Hitler at that time to avoid showing his hand vis-à-vis the British Empire. But a careful reading of the book, and a review of events from 1933 to 1939, show the plan to have been exactly as explained at Popular Front meetings night after night before the war.* Hitler intended first to “ lock his back door ” by destroying the independence of Czechoslovakia, Poland Austria, etc. : then to turn on France and “ annihilate ” her, having, if possible, first isolated her from Britain :

* The present writer, in a Left Book Club pamphlet entitled *Is Mr. Chamberlain Saving Peace?* (April 1939), wrote as follows : “ The annexation of Czechoslovakia was the first stage in the German campaign to obtain two results : (a) the complete securing of Germany’s rear, in preparation for an attack on the West ; (b) the consolidation of her position in the East for its own sake, so that, when she had finished with the West, she would be in a better position both to attack the Soviet Union, and to realise that old dream, via Turkey, of Berlin-Baghdad and India. These are her general objectives : her three specific objectives (in the annexation of Czechoslovakia) are the domination of Rumania, the domination of Poland, and the domination of Yugoslavia.”

then to smash Britain itself : and finally to turn back eastwards and reach conclusions with the Soviet Union.

This plan was successfully carried out up to a point : the only surprise being the locking of the back door not merely by the destruction of Czechoslovakia, but by the unforeseeable negotiation of the Nazi-Soviet pact. But a modification had to be introduced when the Battle of Britain had been won by us, when it became apparent that this country would not submit, and when Hitler had to face the prospect of having all the resources of America at last arrayed against him. Instead of defeating us first, and then turning back on Russia, it became necessary for him to defeat Russia first, and then to turn on us.

Such, in brief outline, is the character of the world war—not an " imperialist " war, but a war for world domination on the one hand and for resistance to it on the other : and not several different wars, some of them " imperialist " and some of them wars of aggression or wars of defence, but one unified and coherent whole.

This view of the matter is now expressed with great exactitude by Stalin himself. " Our war for the freedom of our Fatherland," he said in his broadcast, " is merged into the struggle of the peoples of Europe and America for their independent freedom. It is the united front of the peoples who stand for freedom and against the threat of enslavement by Hitler's fascist armies. In this connection the historic speech of the British Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, about aid to the Soviet Union, and the declaration of the Government of the U.S.A. signifying readiness to give assistance to our country, which can only evoke a feeling of gratitude in the hearts of the people of the Soviet Union, are fully comprehensible and symptomatic."

The real meaning of the last twenty-two months could not be more perfectly revealed.*

We left-wing socialists have always urged that, in spite of all qualifications and cross-currents, the war was one in which the issue was something deeper, broader, more elemental even than socialism itself—the simple human issue of freedom, as opposed to slavery. Day after day, because we said so, we were attacked by Communists—and most of them, we are sure, were prompted by a passionately honest indignation at what they felt to be our betrayal—for “ supporting the imperialist war ” and for our “ bourgeois talk of freedom.” The more courteous denounced us as “ vile reactionaries ”: the less courteous bluntly told us we had been “ bought.” And now Stalin says the same thing, and says what, of course, is true: he does not even, rightly perhaps, go on to say, as we go on to say, that this war for freedom, this war for defence against slavery, must be turned into a positive war for international socialism, by which alone can freedom be fully implemented.

* * * *

The attack on Russia, and Stalin’s broadcast, are flashes of lightning that illumine pronouncement after pronouncement of the Communist Party, and its press organs, since September 1939. Many examples will be found, by the curious about such matters, in *The Betrayal of the Left*. It will be remembered that, as from February of 1940, it was the “ line ” of the Communist

* But writing in the *Labour Monthly* as late as November 1940, Varga, Director of the Institute of World Economy and Politics in Moscow, repeated: “ The present war is an imperialist war for the redivision of the world. . . . The financial oligarchies of all the imperialist countries bear an equal responsibility for it.”

Party not merely to characterise the war as " imperialist "—that is to say, as a fight for loot between two equally rapacious " robber bands "—but to represent the Allies as specially guilty, specially aggressive, specially " warmongering." There was, for instance, the famous leading article in the *Daily Worker* of February 1st, 1940 :

" Hitler repeated once again his claim that the war was thrust upon him by Britain. Against this historical fact there is no reply. Britain declared war, not Germany. Attempts were made to end the war, but the Soviet-German peace overtures were rejected by Britain. All through these months the British and French Governments have had the power to end the war. They have chosen to extend it."

The " peace overtures " were those made after the conquest of Poland. Compare with the following passage from Litvinov's broadcast from Moscow on July 8th, later to be quoted in full : " No agreement or treaty, and no documents signed by Hitler or his henchmen, no promises or assurances on their part, no declaration of neutrality, no relationship with them whatsoever can provide a guarantee against sudden and unprovoked attack . . . The destruction of Hitlerism will mean the annihilation of the most shameful phenomenon of our age " : or with this from Stalin's broadcast : " The peoples of the Soviet Union now see that there is no taming German Fascism in its savage fury."

Once the defeatist " line " had been adopted, it had to be pushed, in defiance of all reality, to its logical conclusion. On April 9th, 1940, the *Daily Worker* wrote :

" The National Government has decided to violate Norwegian neutrality. No matter what

moral arguments are put forward in justification, the fact remains that international law has been blown sky high by the laying of mines in Norwegian waters.”

On April 10th, after the German invasion of Norway and Denmark :

“ In a single day and night, British and French Government wrecking of Norwegian neutrality has extended the war front by nearly 1,000 miles. Two more countries, Norway and Denmark, have been thrown into the abyss of war. Sweden is directly threatened. There is the immediate possibility of a British and French attempt to invade that country. . . There were persistent rumours last night of imminent British and French action against Holland and Belgium . . . ”

On April 15th Mr. Palme Dutt said in Hyde Park :

“ The main responsibility for this crime [the extension of the war to Scandinavia] must be placed with Chamberlain, Reynaud, Attlee, and Blum.”

The Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Daily Worker* on April 20th, at the very height of the virulent pro-Nazi and anti-Ally campaign in the Italian Press :

“ Italian journalists in London have protested against the campaign of provocation in the British capitalist Press which has been going on for the past fortnight.”

The *Daily Worker* on May 9th, the day before Holland was invaded by Germany :

“ Acute tension and terror prevailed in Holland yesterday I spoke to several Dutch correspondents

yesterday, none of whom can possibly be described as 'pro-German.' All of them pointed out that there appears to be no evidence of any German preparations for the invasion of Holland. Yet these stories are being circulated throughout the world from Allied sources, and the question is: What is the motive? If the stories are untrue, what possible reason can there be for spreading them except that the Allies are trying to prepare the atmosphere for an invasion of Holland by themselves? There is stated to be grave tension in Berlin, and expectation of an Allied move at an early moment."

Finally, contrast Stalin's "Germany has exposed herself in the eyes of the whole world as a bloodthirsty aggressor [we will let it go at that, and not bother about just *when* Hitler 'exposed himself']. . . . Our war is merged into the struggle of the peoples of Europe and America for their independent freedom. It is the united front of the peoples who stand for freedom against the threat of enslavement by Hitler's Fascist armies"—contrast it, we say, with the *Daily Worker* of April 18th, 1940: "The main burden of Mr. Eden's remarks was to raise the *bogy* [our italics] of a German conquest of Europe and the world."

* * * *

If the characterisation of the war as "imperialist" was ideologically indefensible, what is to be said of the policy of "revolutionary defeatism," which, until the attack on Russia, was the expression in practical politics of that ideological "formulation"? Every Communist now at last knows that Hitler has always intended one of only two alternative fates for the Soviet

Union—that she should be annihilated by war or that she should become his “appeasing” vassal. Let Communists look at the matter, as of course they will look at it, purely from the point of view of Soviet security.* Suppose Hitler had succeeded in his original plan: suppose he had conquered our island and broken our resistance: suppose America had gone “isolationist” instead of “interventionist,” or that, in spite of an official “interventionist” policy, American Communists had been even more successful than they were in sabotaging her war industry. If all that had happened, Russia’s position, difficult as it now is—“A serious danger,” says Stalin, “is threatening our country”—would have been far more perilous. “We always realised,” said Litvinov in the broadcast already referred to, “the danger which a Hitler victory in the west would mean for us.”

It is one thing for Russia to resist with incomparable heroism (or rather, with a heroism equal to that of our own people) while there, in the background of a long war, are the vast resources of the British Empire and the United States, and their power sooner or later to inflict tremendous blows on the common enemy: it would be quite another thing for her to be resisting alone, with the British Empire knocked out and America unwilling to lift a finger to help her. But this would have been precisely the situation if Communist tactics had

* I do not intend this to be a gibe. I wholly respect (while violently dissenting from) the point of view that nothing matters but the salvation of the Soviet Union, on the ground that the cause of the Soviet Union is the cause of the world’s workers everywhere. This conviction (not to be confused with correct judgment as to what policy is in fact in the best interests of the S.U.) is the inner consistency which explains all the apparent inconsistencies of the Communists.

succeeded. We do not wish to go over the whole painful story again : all the evidence will be found in *The Betrayal of the Left*. But when Communists read Stalin's call : " The workers of Moscow and Leningrad have already begun energetically to form vast popular levies to support the Red Army. Every city which is threatened with enemy invasion must raise such popular levies and must rouse all the workers in order that they should defend with their bodies, their freedom, their honour and their country in a national war against German Fascism "—when they read this call to the people of " every city threatened with enemy invasion " to form what we know as National Defence Volunteers or a Home Guard, they will remember that we took Stalin's sage advice, anticipatorily, in the moment of our mortal peril, but that the Communist Party forbade the International Brigade to help Tom Wintringham in his Home Guard work—Tom Wintringham, who understood from the beginning that the right slogan was not " Stop the Imperialist War " but " Make it a People's War ! "—and expelled Hugh Slater for writing " Home Guard for Victory ! "

We see that Mr. Pritt, in the *New Statesman* of July 5th, talks about the " bogy " of revolutionary defeatism, and says that there is " not a tittle of evidence " to support this " misrepresentation." Mr. Pritt is an eminent lawyer, and should be able to understand evidence : he will find enough and to spare in the forty-five pages of Chapter IV of *The Betrayal of the Left*. The fact is, of course, that a Communist campaign of defeatism in the factories—to mention the factories only—proceeded side by side with capitalist inefficiency and the sabotage which was inevitably, however unconsciously, involved in

capitalist greed for profits. Nor is it an “ accusation ” to discuss revolutionary defeatism : if all the various Communist assumptions about the war had been correct, this policy would have been correct also. In any case, Mr. Rust, in a letter to the *News Chronicle* of July 7th, “ gives the show away ” retrospectively :

“ It is now quite clear that the question of raising the ban on the *Daily Worker* must be considered entirely in the light of the new situation and the position taken up by the Communist Party.

“ Professor Haldane and I are quite prepared to give personal assurances to the Government, if such are desired, that the *Daily Worker*, if allowed to reappear, will vigorously campaign in the factories in order to achieve the maximum production for victory and to bring about the widest possible unity in the fight to defeat and crush the Nazis.”

The implication requires no stressing.

* * * *

We would particularly remind Communists how every possible effort was made by them, both here and in America, to deny us American aid.* They would have been absolutely right, if their various assumptions about the war had also been right: but now we have the final proof that those assumptions were wrong. In the States themselves the isolationist policy of the Communists was indistinguishable from that of Lindbergh—the same Lindbergh who was to say on July 1st, just after the German attack on Russia :

“ I would a hundred times rather see my country ally herself with . . . Germany, than with the

* The documentation will be found in Note III in *The Betrayal of the Left*.

cruelty, godlessness and barbarism that exists in Soviet Russia."

As Wintringham has pointed out, Walter Reuther of the Automobile Workers (C.I.O.) produced a plan for making more planes than capitalist industry dare contemplate. The opponents of this plan were Wall Street and the Communists. How valuable would those planes be to the Soviet Union to-day !

And here in Britain this is how the *Daily Worker* greeted the agreement of the United States Government to transfer to us, in the dreadful weeks that followed the fall of France, the fifty life-saving destroyers :

" For the British people this is supposed to be an occasion for popular rejoicing. An agreement signed on the first anniversary of the war brings them destroyers ploughing through the seas. A pretty picture and nicely stage-managed. But the realities are altogether different. The agreement means that the capitalist world has sunk deeper into war. The U.S.A., the strongest imperialist country in the world, is now wading into the carve-up and switching over to war economy. Millions of American workers and farmers are being brought face to face with the horrors of an unwanted war. . . . Their ruling class, aflame with the lust for profits and desperate to reap a ghoulish harvest from the war, disease and hunger that has overtaken the old world, prepare to hurl the American people into the inferno."

Roosevelt—the man who was to save Britain (or rather help us to save ourselves) and so, indirectly, Russia : who was to promise direct aid to Russia itself the moment she was attacked—was, for Communists

here and in the States “ the American warmonger ” ; the “ pro-war ” American Federation of Labour was called “ the U.S. reaction ” and contrasted with “ John L. Lewis, president of the C.I.O., who is opposed to the war and backed by his huge organisation, the biggest trade-union grouping in America. Lewis is by far the most powerful Labour leader in America.” This was the Lewis who was to oppose Roosevelt’s election with the utmost bitterness—but what Communist does not *now* rejoice that it is Roosevelt, and no one else, who is President? The Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies was pilloried, and the *Daily Worker* quoted with glee a resolution condemning it, and “ reminding its members that there is nothing to prevent them from supporting their opinions by dying in the firing line for the Bank of England.” For the Bank of England—or, as Stalin prefers to put it, for “ the struggle of the peoples of Europe and America for their independent freedom ” ?

This is how Mr. Ivor Montagu characterises Roosevelt in a *Labour Monthly* pamphlet entitled “ *Roll on, Mississippi,* ” and published only just before “ Hitler’s supreme aggression ” :

“ Roosevelt’s dragging of the reluctant majority of the American people inevitably little by little into the war presents a classic picture. From the enactment of the Neutrality Act—‘ the most significant legislation ever proposed to Congress or enacted into law for the purpose of keeping out of a European war.’ From the proclamation of neutrality ‘ but not in thought.’ From the thinking of sympathy to the sending of aid ‘ short of war.’ From the sending of aid (‘ short of war ’ forgotten) to the ensuring that the aid shall arrive. From the

ensuring that aid shall arrive, to the assumption for the responsibility for preventing Hitler's victory.

"The overwhelming mass of American people (as every other) has a resolute sentiment for peace—unclear, politically backward, but definite. Never at any stage did Roosevelt seek to instruct this sentiment, to mobilise American popular power for the collective prevention of war. Never at any stage has he lifted a finger to rally the peoples, in America and outside, to the support of the principles of peace. In place of such leadership, in place of democratic frankness, simply an invariable and inexorable sidestepping of this sentiment by facing it with administratively accomplished fact after fact. The circumvention of the Johnson Act (prohibiting loans of money or credit to defaulting countries) by lending material. The handing over of the old destroyers without consulting Congress. The unilateral tearing up of the Havana Pact (declaring a neutral zone around the Americas) by the Lend-Lease provision enabling repair of British warships in U.S. ports. The seizure of the axis shipping. The seizure of Greenland. The extension of the patrols.

"In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler writes: 'A shrewd victor will, if possible, keep imposing his demands on the conquered by degrees . . . the more the exactions that have been willingly endured, the less justifiable does it seem to resist at last on account of a new and apparently isolated (though, in fact, constantly recurring) imposition.'

"In his dealings with American popular sentiment, the Great Democrat (especially since his

re-election on a peace programme) has shown himself an apt pupil.”

The next section of the pamphlet, entitled *Outstripping Huller* (i.e., Roosevelt is outstripping Hitler) contains the following passage :

“ Roosevelt, as leader of U.S. imperialism, cannot fail to incarnate in himself the dilemma expressed by the rival Big Business ‘ spontaneous public opinion committees ’—whether to continue the war by using Britain, play for big stakes and risk the loss of all by revolution induced by the continuance of the war, or the loss of some by a betrayal in Britain on the style of that of Pétain in France : or whether to be content with small gains now and seek to avert revolution by an agreement with Hitler that carries the risk of Hitler’s continued power. He cannot, and does not therefore, commit U.S. imperialism at this stage.”

And this section of Mr. Montagu’s pamphlet ends with the words :

“ Thus progress. The ‘ War to End War ’ of 1914 gives place to the ‘ Fascism to Outstrip Fascism ’ of 1941.”

* * * *

Do not let us be misunderstood. A good deal of the economic analysis in Mr. Montagu’s pamphlet is brilliant and valuable : and the pamphlet as a whole reveals one aspect of the world situation which we shall overlook at our peril. His mistake, and the mistake of the Communist Party generally, has been to take a certain over-simplified theory about the world as given, and then to make the real world fit the theory, instead of constantly revising the theory in the light of our ever growing knowledge of the real world. That

is bad Marxism and bad commonsense—which are not always the same thing. For Mr. Montagu, the essential fact of the situation was that Roosevelt was the " leader of U.S. Imperialism " : the really essential fact was that, for whatever reason, he was Hitler's enemy.

* * * *

Yes, if the Communists in Britain and across the Atlantic had had their way not a ship, not a gun, not an aeroplane would have come to help us : and America would still be on a peace basis, instead of on the semi-war basis which, when time is everything, may mean all the difference between ruin and salvation to ourselves and Russia in the common fight. Were it not for the help already given to us, we might now be in the position of Belgium and France : were it not for what is coming every day, and presently every hour and every minute, victory over Hitler would be impossible. And this policy of sabotaging American aid was adopted partly as a " revolutionary defeatist " tactic, and partly because in the Communist view—their theoreticians, again refusing to adapt their theory to the facts, stated it over and over again—Anglo-American Capitalism was a far greater menace to world progress than Hitler-Fascism, and a far greater danger to the Soviet Union. Well, Stalin now at least knows better : it is Hitler who has attacked him, it is Roosevelt who has promised help, and " our war for the freedom of our Fatherland is merged into the struggle of the peoples of Europe and America for their independent freedom.

. . . [This is the meaning of] the declaration of the Government of the U.S.A. concerning their readiness to give assistance to our country." Yet so dangerous is it to " theorise in a vacuum," as we have called it, so blind must it make us to hard realities, that two

or three days before the Nazi attack on Russia not only were Communists vigorously denying that there was any likelihood of such an attack, but some of them were also saying that, if such an attack came, the Soviet Union would be unwilling even to consider any offer of help from us or America—on the ground that such help would be “ potentially counter-revolutionary.”

* * * *

Finally, the Communist attitude towards Mr. Churchill since he took office is revealed as a blunder of blunders. Because he was clearly the very heart and centre of British resistance “ in the imperialist war,” he was (again rightly, if the assumptions had been right) the object of specially intense vilification on the part of “ revolutionary defeatists.” He was painted as a monster, dragging the people through “ blood and toil and tears and sweat ” for the sake of the profits of the monopoly capitalists in this “ rich man’s war ;” he was pilloried for “ trying to drag America into the war,” “ trying to drag Eire into the war,” and so on. Recall the fall of France and the first terrible months of bombing. Those were the days when, as Litvinov was to acknowledge after the attack on Russia, “ Great Britain and her Dominions, with the active support of the United States, were bearing the brunt of the struggle against Hitler and his vast war machine,” and when, as the Moscow Radio was to say on July 17th, “ the German hordes appeared on the shores of the Straits of Dover . . . and prematurely celebrated their victory over democratic Britain [but] the British showed in the moment of mortal danger that they were capable, under the leadership of their far-sighted statesmen, of developing the gigantic strength latent

within them." It was Churchill then who rallied and heartened the nation ; but the *Daily Worker* sneered (September 7th, 1940) " The blacker the news the more cheerful the Prime Minister. . . . Why worry, boys? Only 1,075 civilians have been killed and only 800 out of our 13,000,000 houses have been destroyed " ; and Pollitt, who in March 1939 had called on Churchill, Sinclair and Attlee to defeat the Government and form a new one, wrote in the *Labour Monthly* of December, 1940 : " Labour's own daily newspaper hails Churchill as Britain's man of destiny. That is the measure of Labour's shame, the betrayal of every principle of Socialism and Peace. For one thing now understood by our people is that, wherever Churchill speaks or acts, suffering and death are the result, exactly the same as when Hitler speaks or acts." And all this at a time when any realist could see that Churchill hated Hitler's guts so much that nothing would ever induce him to give up the struggle until Hitler was defeated : that, while there were still a lot of appeasers about, and in certain circumstances their numbers might alarmingly increase, Churchill was the major influence against appeasement in the country as a whole : and that if Germany attacked Russia, Churchill, for all his hatred of Communism, could be relied upon to defeat any manœuvre to come in with Hitler on an anti-Soviet front. Churchill did, of course, what everyone except apparently the Communists (and perhaps Hitler) expected him to do : on the very day of the German attack, he scotched any anti-Soviet moves in Britain and the United States by making an uncompromising declaration to the world. Mr. William Gallacher, the Communist M.P., stated that he had been " agreeably surprised " by Winston Churchill's

pronouncement. He was surprised because he had been thinking of how things ought to happen in an abstract world rigidly governed by one unalterable “ law,” and not of how things do happen in the incomparably richer world of flesh and blood, with its innumerable conflicts and cross-currents of men and motives. And so the Communist Party believed, or persuaded itself into believing, that Churchill would weaken in the fight against Hitler as soon as Russia was on our side, and therefore attempted to undermine the position of a man who was to be the very lynchpin of Anglo-Soviet solidarity.

The possibility is now to be foreseen that, as mentioned in another connection above, there will be a race by Communists to the opposite extreme: and here militant socialists will not follow them. Churchill, for all his weakness on the home front, is indispensable as the war leader: he will support the Soviet Union to the last battle and the last man: he is our chief bulwark against appeasers in the Tory ranks—and those gentlemen will want more and more careful watching in the new situation. It is for these qualities, but for these alone, that we support him. The duty to struggle *against* him for a socialist direction to the war effort, and for the preparation of a socialist peace, remains imperative.

* * * *

On this question of appeasement and anti-Soviet sabotage, the people of whom we must really be wary are some of the wretched permanent officials and functionary hacks in the Civil Service and elsewhere, who wield great power behind the scene. When the Soviet Army Mission arrived in London, it was alleged that an Intelligence Officer of field rank had issued

what can only be called a treasonable order—or was it criminal stupidity?—that no photograph should be taken of British and Soviet officers shaking hands. Sir Henry Pownall, Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff, is said to have at once overruled him.

* * * *

Why did we feel it necessary to attack the Communist-controlled " People's Convention ? " Because, originally adopted in July 1940, when the working class of this country was faced with immediate and total defeat by Hitler—whom the Communists had once described, with partial truth if far too narrowly, as " the representative of the vilest elements of monopoly capitalism "—the " points " of the Convention contained no single word, we will not say about victory, but even about the necessity for a desperate struggle to escape defeat ; no single word about a great productive drive to ward off disaster: but instead—at such a time, when Hitler was in the full flush of victory!—the demand for a " people's peace." We have always longed for " a people's peace " : several " points " in the Convention platform were what every decent man was working for: but the demand, for instance, for " the defence of the people's living standards " unaccompanied by any demand for increased production, and the demand for a people's peace unaccompanied by any demand for beating Hitler, showed clearly to all except the most innocent that the People's Convention was planned by its real organisers as an instrument, best suited to the circumstances of the moment, for carrying through a defeatist campaign.

A day or two after the German attack on Russia, when the Communist " line " was in process of being adapted to the new situation, Mr. Gallacher said : " It

is not now necessary to put ‘ a people’s peace ’ in the forefront.” Why? When we said that this cry, in the absence of any demand for victory over Hitler, was a defeatist cry, we were told that on the contrary it was a militant call for “ the real struggle against Fascism from without and from within.” Is “ the real struggle ” less necessary to-day than a couple of months ago? Of course not. But the cry is no longer “ in the forefront ” because it was defeatist and was meant to be defeatist—and the “ line ” is fortunately defeatist no longer.

And now the Communist Party puts forward a programme almost identical with the one we have struggled for since September 1939, and for which Communists have so sternly attacked us: the programme of a People’s War for Victory. Here is the summary in the *Daily Herald* of July 5th :

“ The British Communist Party issued a manifesto yesterday declaring that the cause of freedom requires the victory of the British, American and Soviet peoples.

Among its demands are :

Expose the friends of Fascism and clear them out of all Government posts ; organise production for victory ; end waste and disorganisation ; ensure equal distribution of food supplies ; give adequate air raid protection ; remove the ban on the ‘ Daily Worker.’

Mobilise the people for victory, adds the manifesto, through the fullest democratic activity and initiative.”

* * * *

And, according to the Sunday press of July 6th, the People’s Convention now “ passes a resolution ‘ heartily

welcoming the declaration of the Government in favour of the united fight of the British and Soviet peoples against the common enemy, Hitler Fascism ' and pledges its fullest support." But this is *the same Government* that was formerly attacked with such single-minded enthusiasm. The Government is the same : *its policy is the same* : the war is the same : Hitler is the same : the only difference is that Russia has now been added to the total of Hitler's aggresses. The Communists attacked the Government *when its policy, as everyone can now see, was to come to the aid of Russia if Russia were invaded* ; they now support it because, Russia having been invaded, it duly implements that policy. Either the present support, or the former condemnation, must be wrong.

* * * *

The view we have consistently put forward of the character of the war and of the duty of Socialists in it, as well as our criticism of Communist policy, appears to us to be completely expressed by Litvinov's magnificent broadcast in English from the Moscow Radio on July 8th :

" Germany's treacherous attack on the peaceful Soviet Union despite the pact of non-aggression between the two countries confirmed by Hitler's own repeated solemn declarations, should furnish the world with fresh and overwhelming evidence that no country can feel secure so long as Nazism and Hitlerism exist.

" No agreement or treaty, and no documents signed by Hitler or his henchmen, no promises or assurance on their part, no declaration of neutrality, and no relations with them whatsoever can provide a guarantee against sudden and unprovoked attack.

“ Hitler and his gang consider themselves above all conceptions of the peaceful co-existence of nations and international obligations.

“ There are no obligations for them, and no humanity. There is nothing there which distinguishes civilised society from the jungle.

“ War, hatred, destruction and extermination is the breath of Hitler’s nostrils. In his autobiography Hitler described how he despaired during the period of international peace.

“ Fields soaked in blood, hunger, poverty, murdered wives and sisters—these compose the elements in which Hitler feels happy and comfortable.

“ The Soviet Government was almost the first to realize the danger of Nazi aggression, and appealed to all nations to organise resistance to it.

“ This is not the moment to go into the question of whether the repeated appeal of the Soviet Government brought about the desired results. When the house is on fire the first necessity is to extinguish the flames.

“ Europe is on fire, and parts of other continents too. Over a dozen states have lost their independence. Their lands have been laid waste, and their populations reduced to slavery.

“ Who can doubt that the same fate awaits in the near future those few countries which are still under the illusion of neutrality—of pacts of non-aggression and friendship with Hitler ?

“ Great Britain and her Dominions, with the active support of the United States, were bearing the brunt of the struggle against Hitler and against his vast war machine.

“ Now he has turned against the Soviet Union, and the waging of this struggle against the common foe to

the bitter end is the single and greatest task confronting these countries.

" To achieve his dream of world domination Hitler has always used the principle ' divide and attack.' He uses the most insidious means to prevent his victims from organising a common resistance, taking special pains to avoid war on two fronts against the most powerful European countries.

" His strategy is to knock down his victims and to strike at them one by one in the order prompted by circumstances.

" He intended first to deal with the Western countries so that he would be free to fall upon the Soviet Union, but somewhere a hitch occurred.

" Hitler has not the training for a Channel swimmer yet, and so another plan matured in his brain. Taking advantage of a temporary lull in the west, he decided on a blitzkrieg on Russia, intending afterwards to fall on Britain with all his strength and finish her off.

" He worked at the same time to prevent simultaneous action against himself from the west and east by driving between them an ideological wedge. It is already clear that Hitler's power is slackening, in respect both of the lightning aspect of his blow in the east and of the ' miraculous ' power of his ideological propaganda.

" Mr. Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain, with that statesmanlike promptness which is characteristic of him, immediately informed the world that he was not taken by surprise by Hitler's step, declaring that a Nazi victory over the Soviet would be a catastrophe for the British Empire.

" We always realised the danger which a Hitler victory in the west could mean for us.

" Our Red Army, performing miracles of heroism and

resolution, is now bearing the shock of Hitler's powerful war machine. It is compelling him to draw ever more forces from the west to the east.

“ The British people are enjoying a certain respite after 12 months of incessant bombardment, but it is vitally important that Hitler should not have a moment's respite—that he should be disappointed in his hope of a pact or truce in the west.

“ Each blow struck now will be more effective than ever.

“ The Soviet and Britain are fighting for the integrity and independence of their states and to prevent the extermination of their peoples. At the same time their common victory will bring emancipation to the peoples now under the heel of Hitler.

“ This victory will bring new foundations for the organisation of a better life in conformity with the desire of each of the liberated countries.

“ The destruction of Hitlerism will mean the annihilation of the most shameful phenomenon of our age—the annihilation of the greatest obstacle for the development of civilisation that has ever existed.

“ There may be much suffering and privation, many ordeals, disappointments and temporary setbacks in store for the peoples of the Soviet and Great Britain, but there can be no doubt that, conscious of their responsibility before history and humanity, they will continue their efforts to fulfil their honourable and historical mission.

“ The peoples of the Soviet have responded with enthusiasm to the appeal of the Soviet Government and of our beloved leader, Comrade Stalin.

“ All our peoples have risen like one to defend their native land, firmly determined to carry on the struggle,

together with the other freedom-loving people, until Fascist barbarity is razed to the earth."

* * * *

As we pass these pages for press we see a letter dated July 8th and signed by Harry Pollitt on behalf of the C.P. Secretariat. This is one of those open letters which, by an admirable practice, the Secretariat sends out from time to time to the whole body of members for their political guidance. With it we may fittingly close this essay. It breathes the very spirit of Pollitt's famous "withdrawn" pamphlet, *How to Win the War*, of September 1939. A few words may be said about the background of this latest pronouncement.

After the attack on the Soviet Union, the possibility of which had been derided by Communists or which was, alternatively, said to be possible only if there were prior understanding between Hitler and "British and American Imperialism,"* the Communist Party took a little time to get its bearings. Solidarity with the Soviet Union was, of course, at once proclaimed: the line was switched from anti-war to pro-war: but the Government was still attacked, the Hess affair was still harped on (the implication apparently being that this affair showed willingness on the part of the Government to tie up with Germany against Russia, whereas of course it showed the exact opposite), and Churchill's immediate offer of help to Russia, described in a C.P. press statement as "unsatisfactory," was widely regarded by them as an "imperialist" manoeuvre. Mr. Dutt, in *World News and Views* of July 5th, still doubted whether the Government's "policy of tem-

* See a characteristic article by Mr. Ivor Montagu in *World News and Views* of June 21st—the day before the attack.

porary collaboration with the Soviet Union ” would be seriously carried out : stated that “ the British Imperialists ”—*tout court*—in spite of their “ verbal messages of encouragement ” to the Soviet Union, still planned eventually to crush her (“ There is no room for illusions on these ulterior aims of the imperialists ”) : attacked the composition of our military mission : and demanded “ as the most elementary test of sincerity ” the public trial of Hess. The same issue of the paper carried the “ Proposals for the Campaign adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, June, 1941,” in which Mr. Dutt’s charge against “ the British Imperialists ” was repeated, and it was added that no confidence was to be placed in the present Government. In a hurried “ prescript ” to his “ Notes of the Month ” in the *Labour Monthly* of July, 1941, Mr. Dutt wrote : “ The reactionaries all over the world, and not least in Britain and the U.S. . . . have obtained their immediate objective . . . They have got their Nazi-Soviet conflict. . . . Whether or not any precedent understanding encouraged Hitler to launch his attack . . . ” and called again for a “ People’s Government ” ; and Mr. Montagu, in the same issue, said that “ only one force can prevent the ‘ fine words ’ of Churchill from becoming no more than a veil to the double-cross of the class whose executive instrument he is.”

But what must be called Pollitt’s line—some time during this period he became Secretary once again, in the place of Dutt, who had succeeded him after the previous “ change of line ”—won through. Here is the document of July 8th in full. It will be seen that the demands for a “ People’s Government ” and a “ People’s Peace,” both of them such apparently admirable demands but so essentially defeatist, are dropped com-

pletely, and that " All behind Churchill " is substituted for them :

" Dear Comrades,

The dastardly attack of German fascism on the Soviet Union brought about an immediate change in the entire world situation—a change that Churchill's speech, Stalin's reply, Stalin's epoch-making speech, and Eden's declaration at Leeds have all emphasised as representing a fundamentally new situation in which every government, and every political party has had to respond with new policies and a new approach to all questions.

The Communist Party, naturally, immediately changed its political line to meet the new position and tasks imposed upon it. It made changes that have to be carried through without mental reservations of any kind and not in any tongue in the cheek state of mind.

Our comrades know that it is an axiom of Marxism that the Communist Party formulates all its policies in accordance with the concrete situation that exists—not one that we imagine, or would like to see exist, but as it actually is, in all its grim reality.

This is why we straight away emphasise the fact that in carrying out the policy of the Party, no countenance can be given to any forms of speculation or hesitancy that in any way impede the mightiest effort our Party have ever made to defend the interests of the British people ; interests that today demand the closest and most practical forms of co-operation with the Soviet Union.

The war for the defeat of Hitler is now the supreme issue before the whole of democratic and progressive mankind.

This is what needs to be understood in all its decisiveness, for it governs our entire political approach to every question standing before the people.

In this situation there is only one construction which governs our attitude ; those who are for the defeat of Hitler, and those who openly or covertly endeavour to sabotage the achievement of the victory of the British and Soviet people over Hitler.

This is why we fight for the establishment of a united national front of all those who are for Hitler's defeat.

In the light of this our attitude to the Churchill Government is plain and clear.

When Comrade Stalin refers to Churchill's declaration of support to the Soviet Union as “ an historic utterance,” this puts the question so clearly as to leave no room for doubt as to what our attitude towards this Government should be. Our fight is not directed against the Churchill Government, but those who are the secret friends of Hitler.

We are putting the issues now standing before our Party so sharply because we understand the difficulties that can occur in making the swift adjustment of our policy to meet the new position that its urgency demands. We know that for two years our Party has fought for a political line that has now to be changed ; it was a policy that was correct in the circumstances in which it was operative, but today those circumstances no longer exist.

We should forfeit all claim to be a responsible and serious political party if we did not see the need for adopting the present policy of our Party.

The people of the Soviet Union also have had to make swift adjustments and they have made them with unparalleled speed, and have done so in a way

that has aroused the amazed admiration of the whole world.

The Churchill Government and all the historic political parties of Britain have also adjusted their political line and we take note of and welcome this fact, for already it has had profound and important repercussions throughout the world.

But in our Party doubts are still being voiced that can give the impression that there is disappointment that the Churchill Government has not lined up with Hitler against the Soviet Union in order to prove some theoretical point about the only line of British Imperialism being to effect a switch of the war against the Soviet Union.

Why do we put the question as sharply as this? Simply to put in the sharpest possible way before the whole Party what is new in the position, what is demanded of us and what is at stake.

There can be no doubt in the mind of any Party member who thinks of the situation as a whole, that the fact that the Churchill Government and the Soviet Union are now fighting side by side in the common task of defeating fascism, is the outstanding feature of the situation. And if some Communists did not expect it, neither did Hitler or a lot of other powerful forces in the world.

Speculation on how long this co-operation will last, how soon before a switch is made, are fatal at the present time. *They represent defeatism in its worst possible form ; lack of faith in our own class, our Party and the sound instincts of the people, or the mighty service now being rendered to world humanity by the Soviet Union.*

Undoubtedly there are forces in Britain who would like to make a switch, but they are not the dominant

forces. If, however, any sectarian attitude of the Communist Party, any standing aside and not pulling our full weight in the common effort to defeat Hitler, any putting forward impossible demands, is permitted, any irresponsible fighting of by-elections in present conditions, then our Party simply plays into the hands of the dark forces who are waiting for such an opportunity to take advantage of dissensions and splits in the national fight against fascism, opportunities that will never come if we do our job as our Party can do it, when we are all in it full tilt.

That is why we are not going into any long-drawn-out historical explanations of why the present position has come about, what led up to it, how long it will last, when will the switch come, and all the rest of the speculations that are absorbing the time and energy of certain circles of our Party.

Speculation !—When at this moment we know for a deadly certainty that the flower of the Soviet people is drenching with their blood and bodies every inch of Soviet soil to protect and defend it against the bloody fascist marauders !

Speculation !—When battles are taking place, the like of which the world has never seen before, when thousands of tanks and aeroplanes and millions of men are locked in death grips from the Arctic to the South of the Soviet Union, when events are taking place that make all that Wells or Verne ever wrote look like child’s play.

We only remind our Party of a few facts :

1. When in the pre-war days we campaigned for a People’s Front and alliance with the Soviet Union, we specifically and repeatedly demanded a Government in

which we were prepared to take our part, headed by men like Churchill, Attlee and Sinclair.

2. Now when this same combination, through the circumstances of history and the desperate position of Britain, have changed their past attitude towards the Soviet Union, we are prepared to give this Government our full support as the serious earnest of our intention to do everything in our power to achieve a united national front, that alongside the Soviet Union can defeat German fascism.

3. If the Soviet Union failed to defeat Hitler's attack (though this we do not for one moment countenance), it would only happen through lack of concrete support from such countries as Britain, and the responsibility of our Party would be a heavy one indeed if we had not at every stage of the situation shown in the most practical manner our determination to make the most helpful contribution towards the creation of a united national front. This is the principal political reason why we withdrew our candidate from Greenock. We should have got a large vote, yes—but we should have split the front when our comrades in the Soviet Union are dying in defence of that front. It would have caused a complete misunderstanding of the position of our Party throughout the country, creating the most powerful obstacles to the unity of all the anti-fascist forces it is now imperative should be established. Let there be no mistake about that. Or about the fact that if Hitler were successful, the British people would then feel the whole gigantic might of his barbaric military power on their own backs. And against these facts everything else dwarfs into insignificance.

This is why it is necessary to avoid giving any

impression that our present policy is determined solely because the Soviet Union has been attacked. Our line is in the vital interests of the British people, which now more than ever are bound up with those of the people of the Soviet Union.

Remember how finely Comrade Stalin put this aspect of the question when in reply to Churchill's speech he stated that his offer was accepted on “ the basis of reciprocal aid.”

Reciprocal aid. What does it mean? Simply that you help us, and we help you, or as the Manifesto of the Central Committee states: “ Their fight is *indeed* your fight. And your fight is *theirs*.”

This is why in supporting the Churchill Government we do it whole-heartedly without any reservations, without harping on the disagreements of the past, or raising the fundamental differences between the Communist Party and other political parties. Irresponsible persons, including to our regret certain elements in the Labour Party, may do so, but our aims are bigger; we are above such an incapacity to see the gigantic tasks that have to be carried through now, without hesitation or equivocation, if the British people are to pull their full weight alongside the Soviet people and save themselves from the horrors of fascism.

In the light of what is happening in the Soviet Union to-day and can happen in Britain to-morrow, what does it matter what Gallacher said about Attlee or what the *Daily Worker* said about the *Times*, or that twelve Communists were in prison in 1926, while Churchill was editing the *British Gazette*. These are insignificant things of past history that have no place in the titanic events of the present time. Therefore the policy of the Party is now clearly laid down in the Manifesto of the

Central Committee now being distributed throughout the country.

What is the essence of this policy ? That we fight for full co-operation with the Soviet Union through a pact of alliance with the Soviet Union on the basis of mutual aid. That we expose the friends of fascism and clear them out of all Government posts. That we fight to organise the maximum production for victory, the ending of waste and disorganisation, the ensuring of equal distribution of food supplies, and adequate A.R.P. protection. In this way we are strengthening the prerequisites for victory and defending the daily interests of the people. That we work to achieve the mobilisation of the entire people for victory through the fullest democratic activity and initiative.

This and nothing else is the policy of the Party. It is true that previous statements have not been as specific as this last one ; that is because even the leadership of our Party was not quick enough to realise immediately the responsibilities that the new situation had placed upon us, and because we, too, tended to be obsessed with what had been our approach in the entirely different circumstances of the past. We know you will give serious consideration to this letter. We are confident that if the policy of our Party is now presented as our Party knows how to present a line, once it goes into action, then many of the considerations that are at present holding back the full force of our blows and power will disappear.

Concentrate on the positive. On the bold popularising of our concrete demands. This is the way to get policy across. Positive proposals do more to win conviction than all the criticism in the world. Our Party history shows on many occasions our aptitude for criticism to

the neglect of unfolding our positive policy. *The fight for our policy is what matters now.* This is what will rouse the people and make them give it their support : will build up such power in the factories and unions as will prevent any monkey tricks or side-stepping : will force through the carrying out of measures to ensure the fullest co-operation and alliance with the Soviet Union. This is what will get the maximum in increased production and the taking of effective military steps that will give Hitler the war on two fronts that he has always dreaded. This is what will win the Party influence and respect. Communists setting the example in the factories and all the decisive productive undertakings. This is the policy that will mobilise the people to demand the lifting of the ban on the *Daily Worker*. They will insist upon it so that they have the guarantee of a daily weapon in their hands that will give life, purpose and inspiration in the fight for the national united front against fascism, an alliance of Britain, the Soviet Union and the fullest utilisation of all resources of this country alongside those of the Soviet Union. This will bring the people into action. For they are in no mood for speculation. They have already gone through far too much to tolerate now anything that can prevent the final blow being given to fascism, and woe betide those who in any way attempt to divert the people from this aim.

As circumstances change, as events unfold themselves, the Party leadership will react to these changes and show what needs to be done, *but now every minute, every hour, every day counts in getting into action in popularising our present demands.* John Reed once wrote a book called “ Ten days that Shook the World.” Our Soviet comrades have just gone through fourteen

days that have saved the world. That is the biggest historical fact of our lifetime. They are still fighting as you read this—fighting to defend their land and ours. For twenty-four years they have struggled and sacrificed, gone through civil war, famine, the restoration period, the hard lean years of the First Five-year Plan. They have built up what the Webbs have described as the "greatest social experiment in the history of the world." They are defending it now with a tenacity, heroism and courage that is unequalled in the long and stormy annals of the struggle of the people for freedom. Think of what Hitler has done in fourteen days in other parts of the world, and what he has come up against in the Soviet Union, even though he has made all Europe a munition factory and conscripted millions of unwilling soldiers to fight and die for a cause they detest.

COMRADES ALL !

Unless we now go into action dominated and inspired by what is taking place in the Soviet Union as you read this letter, we shall be committing an unforgivable crime. We are confident our Party will prove itself worthy of its great mission in this, the most serious and dangerous situation we have ever had to face, and that as a result of our contribution we will have immeasurably strengthened the common cause of the British and Soviet people, namely the complete and utter annihilation of fascism from the face of the earth.

Yours fraternally,

on behalf of

THE SECRETARIAT,

Harry Pollitt."

* * * *

Nothing more remarkable can ever have been issued by a political party in any country than this urgently naïf letter, in places of such a patent sincerity, in others so blindly self-deceptive, but always a stern indictment, not only of past policy, but also of a mentality that never passes and is itself revealed even in the very process of attacking it.

Attention, for instance, could be directed to the combination of genuine self-criticism about immediate tactical blunders with a refusal to recognise and profit by mistakes in the case of all the major “ lines ” of the past — “ *it was a policy that was correct in the circumstances in which it was operative* ” : to the plain mis-statements by which it is sought to convince the unwilling—“ *the Churchill Government and all the historical political parties of Britain have also adjusted their political line,*” or “ *Now when this same combination . . . have changed their past attitude to the Soviet Union,*” when in the very preceding paragraph the pre-war (and never since altered) attitude of this combination is given as the reason for the then Communist campaign in their support : and to the implicit but never explicit admission, post factum and in spite of all previous denials, that the Communist campaign of September 1939 to June 1941, if successful, would in fact have resulted in our defeat—“ *If . . . any standing aside and not pulling our full weight in the common effort to defeat Hitler, any putting forward of impossible demands, is permitted, any irresponsible fighting of by-elections in present conditions, then our Party simply plays into the hands of the dark forces who are waiting for such an opportunity to take advantage of dissensions and splits in the national fight against fascism,*” which was precisely the substance of our charge against the French Communists.

Attention, too, could be called to the flat abandonment, without a word of explanation, of one of the now inconvenient major premisses on which Communist policy had previously been based, and the substitution for it, as necessary to win support for the new " line," of precisely the " formulation " for which left socialists had been so uncompromisingly attacked—" *Undoubtedly there are forces in Britain which would like to make a switch, but they are not the dominant forces* " : to the belated sense of urgency, of *time*, which, as was pointed out so often but never with a trace of success, was always the desperately crucial factor, even more crucial indeed last year than this—" *no countenance can be given to any forms of speculation or hesitancy that in any way impede the mightiest effort our Party have ever made to defend the interests of the British people* " " *the war for the defeat of Hitler is now the supreme issue before the whole of democratic and progressive mankind* " (note the " now ") ; " *there is only one construction that governs our attitude ; those who are for the defeat of Hitler and those who openly or covertly endeavour to sabotage the achievement of the victory of the British and Soviet people over Hitler* " ; " *If Hitler were successful, the British people would then feel the whole gigantic might of his barbaric military power on their own backs. And against these facts everything else dwarfs into insignificance* " ; " *In the light of what can happen in Britain tomorrow* " ; " *But now every minute, every hour, every day counts.*"

Then there is the implication, unavoidably involved in the mobilising of full aid for Russia, but still never squarely faced, that the previous defeatist policy, if it had weakened our powers of resistance, would have been disastrous for Russia herself—" *If the Soviet Union*

failed to defeat Hitler's attack . . . it would only happen through lack of concrete support from such countries as Britain ” : and, almost most significant of all, an understanding that the new campaign, if it is to succeed, must not appear to concentrate on Soviet to the exclusion of British interests, coupled with an almost despairing realisation that, whatever the appeals, the Party membership will not find it easy either to control or to conceal its genuine emotional reactions—“Changes that have to be carried through without mental reservations of any kind and not in any tongue in the cheek state of mind ” ; “ This is why it is necessary to avoid giving any impression that our present policy is determined solely because the Soviet Union has been attacked. Our line is in the vital interests of the British people, which now, more than ever, are bound up with those of the people of the Soviet Union.”

But the supreme lesson is to be learnt from what will become a classic passage in the psychopathology of politics : “ *In our Party doubts are still being voiced that can give the impression that there is disappointment that the Churchill Government has not lined up with Hitler against the Soviet Union in order to prove some theoretical point about the line of British Imperialism being to effect a switch of the war against the Soviet Union.*” We spoke earlier of that extreme of political frivolity which would lose a world rather than sacrifice a jot or tittle of ideological purity. Harry Pollitt goes further. He accuses some Party members of hating British Imperialism so much more than they love even the Soviet Union, and of such fanatical devotion to a religious theory, that they would sooner see the Soviet Union itself destroyed than be compelled to acknowledge either that their theory must be modified or that

British Imperialism can in any circumstances whatever be other than the enemy of enemies. That is where, owing to a lack of realism in thought and of balance in character, a devotion to the cause of human freedom unparalleled in all history has ended.

* * * *

It only remains to ask, what should be our attitude to the Communist Party in the new situation—and so long as they maintain their present policy, but not for a day or an hour longer ?

The answer is simple. The first necessity is the maximum national effort to defeat Hitler. The Communists, since June 22nd, can play a very important part in securing that objective. They are now as much " in " the national war effort as anyone, and far more than some : and that is what, from a day by day point of view, matters. The energy, enthusiasm and devotion in which they are unrivalled must be utilised to the full. The co-operation of everybody who wants to win the war, on a precisely equal footing, should be the very basis of our policy. Anything in the nature of censorship, direct or indirect, or of differentiation of any kind, would be nothing but sabotage and defeatism.

This means, quite frankly, that bitterness about the past must not in any way dictate present policy. When, in Litvinov's words, " the house is on fire," the important thing is that someone is helping you to put out the flames, not what he was doing previously. Indeed, the sincerity of a man's belief that to beat Hitler is everything may be tested by his ability to put the needs of the present before the memory of the past.

Nothing can be gained by pretending that all this is easy : for my own part I sometimes find it difficult not to feel bitter when I think of Communist policy from

September 1939 to June 22nd, 1941. For a variety of reasons, some good and some bad, it is more difficult for the Labour Party than for any other to adapt itself to the necessities of the new situation. But it is vital that it should do so. Any failure in this direction could only play into the hands of those reactionary elements who prefer Hitler to Stalin : and that would be to betray Britain and socialism.

The case of the *Daily Worker* is pivotal. It was banned because it was sabotaging the war effort : it will now, if allowed to reappear, do the opposite. The ban should therefore immediately be lifted. There is nothing more to it than that.

