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## CURRENT NOTES

During the last six months of 1934—a period of intense international strain — at least two situations arose clearly resembling that which served as an excuse for war in 1914. The murder of Dolfuss and the assassination of Alexander and Barthou, both found countries urgently needing war—yet no war came. What was the reason?

### The Dolfuss Affair.

No informed person to-day doubts that German fascism was directly responsible for the death of Dolfuss. The old Italo-German antagonism over the control of Austria was made more acute by the state of German internal economy. In June, 1934, the production figures for the German steel trade—despite increased activity in armament building—fell from 43,000 to 38,600 tons. A similar state of affairs existed in all industries. Furthermore, as the June executions of fascist leaders clearly indicated, the irrevocable division of the various sections of German capitalism had reached a new stage of savagery. Hitler Germany was desperate. Threatened with imminent economic collapse, threatened by the continually increasing antagonisms in the ranks of the bourgeoisie, threatened too by the rising wave of proletarian revolution, Hitler, the paid agent of the dominant Thyssen finance-capital group, deliberately provoked war with Italy, in order to try to win from her dominance of Austria. Then, having lured thousands of Austrian Nazis into a hopeless putsch—he realised the mistake and entered into negotiations for a peaceful settlement.

Why?

Germany had everything to gain from a successful war. Defeated in 1918, the German capitalists were by 1934 in even more desperate straits than the capitalists of France and Britain, who held in their hands the fruits of victory. Desperate restrictions of imports and increasing financial unreliability led to Germany's increasing isolation. In the words of the "Observer," "German isolation had assumed a form amounting to quarantine." French imperialism was well aware of Germany's desperation, and mortally afraid of hostilities being directed against her; for France, the only desirable outlet for Germany was war against the Soviet Union, the one common enemy of the capitalist powers. Britain was in agreement on this point. British capitalism is behind Germany; but for British ends. If British arms, intended for war on the U.S.S.R., were to be

used by Germany against Italy—i.e., if inter-imperialist war, from which Britain had nothing to gain and everything to fear, were to occur instead of anti-Soviet war—Britain was determined that Germany would man the guns alone.

In Italy the economic situation was little better than in Germany. Mussolini, acting in the interests of Italian capital, also needed war—not against Germany, however, for, despite the death of Dolfuss, the failure of the Nazi putsch left Italy still dominant in Austria. Italy, therefore, failed to respond to the provocation.

Two powerful forces played the decisive rôle in preventing Germany from carrying the provocation a stage further: British capitalism, without the aid of which Germany dared not bring matters to a head, and the international revolutionary movement, particularly its sections in Germany and Italy. Neither Hitler nor Mussolini dared risk a war. Thaelmann and Gramsci were in prison, but the spirit of Thaelmann and Gramsci was abroad.

No allies forthcoming, both countries desperate internally, rising tide of workers' revolution—war averted. This is our first picture.

### Alexander and Barthou.

The situation that led to the assassination of Alexander and Barthou shows how tangled the web of capitalist contradictions can become. Three pieces of evidence indicate who was responsible:

(1) Alexander, king of Jugo-Slavia, and Barthou, foreign minister for France, had met in Marseilles in order to discuss the possibility of reforming the Franco-Jugo-Slavian alliance. Jugo-Slavia, a state formed in 1918 round the nucleus of Serbia, was until the deepening of the economic crisis a puppet of French imperialism. From the time of its formation, a major antagonism had existed between it and Italy, due mainly to rivalry for control of the Adriatic, necessary for trade routes.

Now the madly aggressive policy of Hitler, and his desperate efforts to get control of Austria, led, as we have seen, to an Italo-German antagonism that had already almost resulted in war. Germany and Jugo-Slavia were therefore both opposed to Italy, though for different ends, and Jugo-Slavia began to move away from France towards Germany.

Barthou, on behalf on French capital, was engaged in trying to recapture Jugo-Slavian sup-

port. He and Alexander met to discuss this in October—but were murdered before the conversations took place. Who was responsible?

The first piece of evidence points circumstantially to Italy, the country which had most to gain from preventing Jugo-Slavia strengthening its alliances.

(2) The murderer was a Croat—that is, a member of one of the subject nationalities of Jugo-Slavia, a subject nationality that was ruthlessly oppressed and exploited by the dominant Serbs. Alexander was the representative and figure-head of the Serbs. The murderer belonged to a terrorist organisation—which, Jugo-Slavia proved, was supported by fascist Italy. (The financing of terrorist organisations in Jugo-Slavia in order to weaken it internally has been one of the imperialist devices of Italy since the war.) Once again the evidence points to Italy.

(3) The photographs of the assassination implicate the French police. What is the significance of this?

Barthou was the representative of the capitalist group in France which followed the policy of temporising in order to stave off war as long as possible. This led him to make advances even to the Soviet. Another capitalist grouping in France, and one which tried to effect a fascist coup in the previous February, advocated the more reckless policy of immediate war against the Soviet Union. The attempted fascist coup in February revealed beyond question that this group controlled the police. The implication of the police in the murder of Barthou, therefore throws suspicion on them.

The full explanation appears to be that Italian fascism used the Croatian to precipitate a crisis in which the question of the Adriatic would be settled, but, owing to the activity of the French fascists, Barthou, as well as Alexander, fell, and instead of a Jugo-Slavia divided from France, Mussolini, had he pursued his plans, would have had to face a Jugo-Slavia united with France by a common provocation.

Germany would have welcomed a war in which France and Jugo-Slavia were united against Italy as an excellent chance of seizing Austria. But once more international antagonisms were too complex. Italy could not afford to provoke France, France and Italy recognised Germany's designs on Austria, and Jugo-Slavia was incapable of independent action. Thus Sir John Simon was able to intervene (in accordance with Britain's policy of avoiding inter-imperialist war), and secure for himself and his country praise for having handled a delicate situation tactfully, and for having averted war.

## A New Stage of Crisis.

In both cases international antagonisms failed to come to fruition in war, despite deliberate war preparations, partly because of the very intensity of those antagonisms. In both cases the development of the war crisis coincided with a great intensification of the class-struggle in the countries concerned—anti-fascist demonstrations in Germany and Italy,

the United Front in France—so that the danger of revolution acted as a brake on the war plans of the bourgeoisie. In both cases, the inter-monopoly antagonisms in the countries concerned, reflected in the one case in the June executions in Germany, in the other in the fascist implication in the murder of Barthou, further complicated the situation. The general crisis of capitalism has entered a new stage—a stage in which the bourgeoisie carries out war provocations and cannot follow them up; in which the revolutionary action of the workers plays an ever-increasing part.

Let us examine its effects in a few countries.

## Britain.

The most important result of the murder of Dolfuss was the temporary breakdown of the anti-Soviet bloc. The lunatic action of the Reich, displaying the incalculability of German policy, increased France's mortal fear of German aggression, and led to increased petitioning for the entry of the Soviet Union into the League of Nations. Britain for the moment was compelled to comply. Overnight the question of the admission of the Soviet became a question "about which there would be no dispute in this country," and even Chamberlain and Churchill expressed admiration of the "pacific" policy of the Soviet.

That this was a mere expedient to pacify France has been proved by recent developments. The British policy of the rearmament of Germany for war against the Soviet has reached the point when the Government has made known its intention to have Part 5 of the Treaty of Versailles (which limits Germany's armed strength) superseded by a system in which all have equal right to arm. By this simple device British imperialism answers those who say it is conniving at the breaking of the Treaty. "Now no purpose will be served by harping upon a breach of the Treaty."

British statesmen are becoming increasingly outspoken about the reason for German re-armament. Thus in November Lloyd George made a statement that has since been repeated: "I am not afraid of Nazism, but of Communism"—and if Germany is seized by the Communists, Europe will follow; because the Germans could make a better job of it than any other country. Do not let us be in a hurry to condemn Germany. We shall be welcoming Germany as our friend."

The murder of Dolfuss and the temporary collapse of the anti-Soviet bloc show that a new stage in the general crisis of capitalism has been reached—a stage in which long-range planning is constantly checked and side-tracked into a policy of momentary expediency. Britain's effort to prevent, at all costs, inter-imperialist war in Europe, has forced her temporarily to recognise the Soviet as a potent factor for peace.

In Britain, as in all other countries, insecurity and instability in international affairs reflects insecurity and instability at home. The increasing activity of Mosley (under police protection), the Sedition Bill, and the increasingly deceitful policy of the social-democratic Labour Party—

are the outward signs of the chaos of British financial-industrial interests. Just as fascism in Germany advanced on three fronts—with the social-democrats on the left lulling the workers into a feeling of false security against the possibility of fascism, with the constitutional government in the centre constantly increasing its dictatorial power, and with the band of police-protected fascist thugs and demagogues on the right—so fascism is advancing in England.

But Mosley has not been ignored. The fate of his monster meetings at Olympia and Hyde Park needs no recalling. And the opposition to him—the hundred thousand hostile workers that surged round him at Hyde Park, for instance—was led solely by the Communist Party. In England, as elsewhere, events are proving that the Communist Party alone is the party of struggle against Fascism for Revolutionary Socialism.

On the one hand—economic disintegration, the advance of fascism on all fronts, the repeated collapse of efforts to rebuild the anti-Soviet bloc (e.g., Hitler's recent diplomatic cold), desperate and momentary manoeuvres to keep inter-imperialist peace in Europe; on the other hand—increasing militancy of the working-class, leading to greater support for the genuine anti-fascist fight of the Communist Party—this is the position in England today.

## Italy.

In Italy, at the time of the Dolfuss assassination, the united Communist and Socialist parties pointed out that it was "miserable hypocrisy on the part of the Italian Fascist Press to represent this mobilisation (of Italian troops on the Austrian border) as an act of defence of the independence of Austria." They called upon the soldiers sent into Austria "to fraternise with the Austrian workers, to aid them in their struggle against the Fascist bands, to fraternise with the soldiers of all nationalities, and be true to one flag only—the Red Flag of Socialist revolution."

At the same time the elements of crisis and disintegration in Italian Fascism were rapidly maturing. Just as disintegration in Germany led to the murder of Roehm and his colleagues, so in Italy—where equally effective if less flamboyant methods are employed—it led to the exile of Arpinati. Arpinati was one of the oldest leaders of Italian Fascism; a man who, in his capacity as Secretary of State for Home Affairs, had been personally responsible for much of the terror and oppression of the last decade. But quickly and without explanation he was banished. Black-shirted Fascism, like brown-shirted Fascism, decays, and in its decay reveals its brutality. It has become common among bourgeois leaders of thought to regard Italy as the place where Fascism flourishes without the excesses of its German counterpart. Yet daily the Special Court passes sentences of banishment, imprisonment, and death on political offenders. The position of

Gramsci(\*) in Italy, slowly dying in prison, bears a resemblance to that of Thaelmann, in Germany. Mussolini's methods are quieter than Hitler's. But, apart from the noise, there is little difference between them. The increasing internal confusion in his country leads to actions in foreign affairs—the payment of Croatian national revolutionaries in Jugo-Slavia, deliberate war provocation in the murder of Alexander—exactly similar in frenzy and immediate war purpose to those of Germany.

In Italy, too, the position to-day is confusion in international affairs, disintegration at home, and solid advance of the workers' revolution on the basis of continuous unity between the Communist Party and the rank and file followers of the Socialist Party, unity in which Socialist leaders are sometimes forced to participate.

## Germany.

Already we have seen one instance of the hopeless confusion of Germany's position on the international field, and we have noted that this confusion was coincident with internal strife, and countered by the growing force of working-class opposition. Even before the murder of Dolfuss, after the June murders of Fascist leaders, Ernst Henri had pointed out that the key to the future of Germany lay in the absolute disillusionment of the middle class—whose representative, Roehm, was among the dead—and "the re-appearance of the revolutionary proletariat on the open political arena in Germany." He added that the result of the concurrent working of these two factors—since the German workers certainly knew how to build revolution on all fronts—would be that large sections of the middle classes would throw in their lot with the workers behind Ernst Thaelmann.

Subsequent events have fully confirmed his opinion. The death of Hindenburg, and the immediate appointment of Hitler, in defiance of Nazi-made laws, as Chancellor, revealed not only the panic of the bourgeoisie at being deprived of the broad shield of a well-nigh mythical personality—one of Goebbel's myths—but also in the vote taken after the event, the strength of the gathering opposition. Official Nazi sources admitted 7,000,000 votes against Hitler. Certainly there were more. Over 7,000,000 anti-Fascist fighters, despite conditions of the utmost terror, registered their opposition to Hitler. Indeed, the revolutionary workers had entered once more "the open political arena in Germany."

And the other part of Henri's prophecy was likewise fulfilled. Ever larger sections of the petty bourgeoisie followed the lead of the workers. The immediate expression of their dissatisfaction with National Socialism was not direct. The importance of the religious conflicts in Hitler Ger-

\* Since this was written, the united action of the Italian workers, and those of all countries, has secured the commutation of Gramsci's sentence to one of banishment. But his health has already been thoroughly broken.

many at the end of last year lies precisely in the fact that they indicate this discontent. Karl Barth was banished—not because he was the leading theoretician of non-conformist Christianity, but because he represented and influenced large sections of the petty bourgeoisie, who were, like him, thoroughly disgusted with Nazism.

On the other side of the picture, the situation of German capitalism grows more and more desperate. We have seen the action taken by its representatives in the Dolfuss affair. We have seen the way in which it watched—incidentally trying to shape events to its own satisfaction—the murder of Alexander and Barthou. Foiled in these instances, needing some outlet, German capitalism was faced once more with the alternatives, “expand or burst.”

This Britain realised, and, being unable to face with equanimity the second alternative (since it would mean a Soviet Germany), set about assisting Germany in the first. Hence the rapprochement between England and Germany in December, 1934, and January, 1935. Hence the connivance of Britain in Nazi propaganda and terrorisation of voters in the Saar. Hence the success of Hitler in the Saar plebiscite. The full “value” of the success has yet to be learned, but the revolutionary history of the Saar workers makes it safe, even thus early, to characterise it as a Pyrrhic victory.

Here, too, we see the same features in operation—increasing frenzy in the ranks of Capitalism; this in conjunction with other features of crisis leading to attempts to provoke war, complexity of international antagonisms, and instability of alliances saving the situation (so far)—and, against it all, the re-entry of the revolutionary proletariat, leading onward all sections for whom Fascism does not cater, on the open political arena in Germany.

## In Other Countries.

Everywhere it is the same picture. The San Francisco Strike and the Textile Strike in America, strikes and revolts in Manchukuo, strikes in Japan; the bankruptcy and increasing brutality of the New Deal, official murders of Nazi women in Germany, growth of Fascism in Britain, France, everywhere; rebellion in Greece, war in South America, threats of war all around—this is the world we live in to-day. The alignment of powers changes so rapidly that it is impossible to say to-day what will be the position to-morrow(†), the internal strife between various monopoly capitalist groups reaches an ever higher pitch of intensity, the unity and revolutionary action of the working class (and petty bourgeoisie) continually increases. Unrest, strife, misery, bitterness—these are the conditions, and out of these conditions two things alone can spring—revolution and war. Already we have seen the progress of the world towards

† The seriousness of the situation may be gauged from the frenzied way in which Britain is attempting to reconcile France and Germany at present—the Air Pact—and from Britain's open announcement of her policy of re-armament. *Though war has not come, it comes visibly nearer.*

war; we have seen that it has only been averted on the basis of the complexity of international antagonisms, itself a feature in other circumstances productive of war; we are now to consider the progress of the world in revolution.

## Progress in China.

Here we are immediately faced with a contrast. Despite the keenness of international enmity, war on a grand scale has not broken out. That does not mean that it will not; at any moment alliances of sufficient stability might be formed, and the excuse be found; but so far this has not occurred. On the other hand, revolution has broken out afresh in Spain, and is rapidly advancing in China. The Chinese Soviets have long passed the stage at which the bourgeois press could afford to ignore them. Now it spends its time in slandering them. Chinese Communists are always bandits, who divide their time between capturing missionaries, and retreating before “the forces of law and order.” They have been retreating so long that even the “Sydney Morning Herald” has realised that they “are moving westward in accordance with a premeditated plan, and, if their ‘flight’ continues much longer, they will soon join forces with the Reds in Szechwan, constituting a far more formidable menace to the peace and order of China than they ever did in Kiangsi.”

The truth is that the Chinese Soviet Republic is the one stable government in China. Its successful defence against six wars of intervention gives a clear indication of its strength. The efficiency and organisation of its government(‡) bear eloquent testimony to the permanence of the gain that has been made. Despite the fact that revolutionary fighting is continuing, the constructive value of revolution is already being experienced. Increases of from 100 to 200 per cent. in rice production—all of it available for the use of the people; none of it burnt as in capitalist countries—the reclaiming of some 33,000 acres of swamp land, advances in all branches of industry . . . this is Soviet China.

## The Spanish Revolution.

But the Chinese Revolution began some years ago. Its history during 1935 was one of consolidation and extension, a history full of moment. Even more important for 1935, however, was the outbreak of revolution on a new front. The revolutionary crisis in Spain had long been brewing. The semi-feudal conditions of agriculture (monopoly-capitalist ownership of land, superimposed on feudal serf labour best describes it), with its train of misery and starvation, had roused the peasantry to action. The appalling conditions of the miners in the Asturias and elsewhere, the disorganisation of industry typical of the general crisis of capitalism, mass unemployment, rationalisation; all these, combined with the ripening of the struggle of the oppressed nationalities (Catalans, Basques, Galicians), for national autonomy welded the workers of Spain together.

‡ See “Fundamental Laws of the Chinese Soviet Republic.”

Early in September a conference of Government officials and big land-owners in Madrid received its answer in an anti-Fascist general strike there and in the Asturias. On Sept. 13 the Communist and Socialist parties of Spain achieved unity. On the 23rd, the Government declared a state of alarm to exist. On October 4th, Lerroix (a Radical!) announced that members of the Catholic (Fascist) party had been taken into his cabinet. Immediately a general strike began throughout Spain. In the Asturias, the workers took up arms, seized Oviedo, and hoisted the Red Flag over the Town Hall. Everywhere their example was followed . . . but not everywhere with such success. The bourgeoisie was in confusion. Wherever strong measures were taken the workers were successful. Why then did the revolution fail? Or did it fail, in fact, at all?

These facts stand out clearly. In Catalonia, a proletarian area, the earliest and most crushing defeats were suffered. In Catalonia, Anarcho-syndicats led the struggle. In Madrid, action was not taken quickly enough. At the crucial moment, at the beginning of the revolution, no attempt was made to seize the centre of government. In Madrid, the Socialists—now united with the Communists, but without a Communist understanding of the art of revolution, such as day to day struggles on right lines alone can teach—led the struggle. In the Asturias, the highest point of revolution was attained. Soviets were set up, and functioned. Even now the struggle is continuing. In the Asturias the Communist party led the revolution.

Although the United Front was achieved, the influence of Communism was not everywhere strong enough to consolidate advantages, or set the struggle on right lines. But the revolution in Spain has not been defeated. The Spanish workers are learning from their comrades in the Asturias that victories can be won by genuinely revolutionary action.

War preparations, war situations, no war. Mass discontent, a revolutionary crisis—revolution in China and Spain.

## Wars and Revolutions.

In 1914, at the beginning of the general crisis of capitalism, a position was reached when capitalists could see one way out—war—and workers one way out—revolution. In 1914, the first world war preceded the outbreak of revolution, revolution which freed the people of Russia, but elsewhere failed—for the time. 1914 saw the beginning of the first round of wars and revolutions.

## Revolutions and Wars.

In 1935, the general crisis has matured. After passing through a period of temporary illusory stability, the capitalists once more see but one solution—war (for which the workers must now be cowed by Fascism). The workers, too, see but one solution—revolution. This time revolution has preceded war. In 1935, we have entered upon the second round of REVOLUTIONS AND WARS.

## AUSTRALIA

### “Weathering the Crisis”!

THE past year is notable as being the hundredth year since the first white settlement was established in this part of Australia. It marked the close of a century of development and progress, and it is unfortunate that it coincided with the fifth year of a world-wide economic depression unparalleled in its severity. There were various indications, during the earlier months of the year, that Victoria was emerging from the depression, but the movement has been checked and slowed down by various causes. . . .

Thus “The Monthly Summary of Australian Conditions,” produced by the National Bank, begins an article in the issue of January 11, 1935, on the subject of the condition of trade in Victoria. The writer does not attempt to explain directly the “various causes,” but instead analyses the economic effect of the Centenary celebrations. He explains that the accidental increase in employment caused by the necessity for decorating the city, and the consequent “increased aggregate earnings of factory employees, builders, painters, decorators, shop hands, and others, which preceded and have continued through the celebrations, have assisted retail trade and the sale of all commodities, including foodstuffs, in almost all

centres. Failing this assistance there may have been an unwelcome decline.”

Very considerably, he amplifies this last cryptic comment by tabulating “the various unfavorable factors, which but for the stimulating effect of the Centenary celebrations,” may have had this undesirable result. They are as follow:—

“1. Low prices for wool, wheat, butter, apples, and base metals.

“2. Unfavorable winter season in the North and North-west of the State, and unseasonable spring and summer weather affecting trade conditions.

“3. Losses in various sections due to storms, floods, and grasshoppers.

“4. Disturbed international trade position with marked restriction on Australia’s export trade to various countries.

“5. Heavy expenditure locally on transport and amusement during the past few months, with a consequent lessening of the amount many people could spend in other directions.”

It is an interesting commentary on this last factor that the proprietors of Joyland—the new amusement park in Batman Avenue “£1,000,000 of fun for 3d.”—are bankrupt.

Reasons 2 and 3 are of the familiar type—unfavorable seasonal and other natural conditions.

The fact that these conditions do, on some occasions, have some bad effect makes them an invaluable shield for the bourgeoisie in the present state of crisis. More frequently, however, they have the opposite effect; restrictions, whether by natural or artificial means (burning of wheat, sinking of butter in the sea, ploughing in of cotton, etc., etc.), inflate the prices of the sold commodities and, though the small and middle producer is hard hit, the "big" man benefits. The National Bank expert does not take account of this.

Reasons 1 and 2 are on a different level, in that they are fundamental features of the present trade position as it affects Australia. But, like all bourgeois economists of the present day, the writer—whose estimate of the position is a very sober one—has taken for causes what are, in fact, simply effects.

It will be obvious that reasons 1 and 4 are largely interdependent. Wool and wheat are the main Australian exports, primary products comprising 95 per cent. of the total export trade. Now, the trade value of the wool exported from Australia for the months July-November, 1934, was £11,752,000, a decrease of £12,331,000 (Australian currency) on the trade value of the amount exported during the corresponding period of 1933. In the case of wheat, wool, and apples, there were slight increases, but not nearly sufficient to balance the huge increase on wool. The following figures (in million pounds sterling), for which the National Bank's "Monthly Summary" for January is also responsible, give a very fair picture of conditions:—

	July-Nov., 1933.	July-Nov., 1934.
Imports . . . . .	25.0	32.3
Exports . . . . .	52.9	41.9

The balance of trade in favor of Australia has shrunk by £11,500,000, and when we take into consideration the fact that the export figures quoted include, for 1933 £3,809,000, and for 1934 £4,214,000 of gold, the parlous condition of Australian capitalism becomes very apparent. The position has of course been induced to a great extent by "restriction on Australia's export trade to various countries," but to elevate this to the rank of a reason is ridiculous. It is simply begging the fundamental question—why these world-wide restrictions? Why has the race between nation and nation to build up national economy taken on this form? And there can be but one answer—the same for Australia as for Germany, England, France, America, Japan, and all the rest of them. Neither plagues of grasshoppers, nor floods, nor unfavourable weather conditions in Australia can explain Japanese, German, and Italian restrictions on Australian wool.

The reason can only lie in the world-wide development of a new stage of intensity in the general crisis of capitalism.

## The Centenary Celebrations.

The reaction of Australian capitalism to these conditions is most vividly illustrated in the Centenary celebrations. In general these celebrations may be characterised as conscious speeding up

of the drive towards fascism and war; in particular they consisted of a frenzied attempt to give a semblance of solidity to Anglo-Australian relations, being marked by a festival of flag-waving and military propaganda, by military conferences, and an air race which revealed the sharpness of Anglo-American antagonism, and which provided a thorough test of the speed and endurance of the latest type of British military plane—the de Havilland Comet.

None of our Centenary guests lacked their importance. Prince Henry supplied glamour; the poet laureate, mysticism. But the most important contribution to the proceedings was made by three men whom the public saw very little—Sir Maurice Hankey, Field Marshall Lord Milne, and Sir John Cadman. In Australia the Press unanimously proclaimed that the visit of Sir Maurice Hankey (secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence), was simply designed to do honour to Victoria's "Hundred Years of Progress." He might, of course, discuss Defence, but that was not the object of his visit. The English Press told a different story. Sir Maurice, it was announced, would arrange his tour of the Dominions, designed to strengthen the defences of the Empire, so as to be in Melbourne during the Centenary celebrations. His colleagues, Milne and Cadman, are respectively the mechanisation expert of the British army, and the man who arranged petrol supplies for the Allies in the World War.

The effect of their visit was immediately apparent. First, there was a sudden rise in the number of political books and periodicals which were banned. "International Press Correspondence" was one of the first to suffer, and on several occasions supplies of "The Labour Monthly" were held up. Second, there were rumours of the re-introduction of compulsory military training. Generally, there was a tightening up of repressive measures and active war-preparation in all directions.

For Australian capitalism, the Centenary celebrations marked the most powerful advance to date, of the process of fasciation and preparation for war.

## The Workers' Reply.

As in other parts of the world, the present level of economic crisis in Australia leads to intensification of the trend to fascism. Also, as in other parts of the world, there develops simultaneously a revolutionary working-class movement gathering in strength and in unity as it resists the growth of restrictions, the attacks on living conditions, and the advance of fascism, and fights for immediate demands and the ultimate overthrow of capitalism. During the main period of the Centenary celebrations, the period when the Duke of Gloucester was in Melbourne, the most significant indications of the development of such a movement were the All-Australian Congress Against War and Fascism, held in the Port Melbourne Town Hall, and the Melbourne Tramway Strike.

## The Melbourne Tramway Strike.

It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of the fact that the Melbourne Trammies chose to conduct their strike for better conditions during the Centenary celebrations. It was a challenging, militant gesture, saying with the utmost clarity that the working-class was not deceived and swept off its feet by the outburst of patriotic propaganda. It was at once a demonstration of the revolutionary initiative of the tram-men, in that they seized on a time when the disorganisation of tramway services would have important practical consequences in order to obtain their demands, and would be a powerful counterblast to the advance of fascism.

No less significant was the manner in which it was betrayed by the social-fascist "Trades Hall Disputes Committee," into whose hands the struggle was allowed to be taken. It was a clear indication that in Australia, as in England, the Labour Party leaders are selling the workers' struggles to the bourgeoisie, that they are paving the way for the advance of fascism. They can be prevented from doing so, as the Wonthaggi Miners' struggle earlier in the year showed, by united militant rank-and-file action.

## The Congress Against War.

The work that had to be done in arranging the Australian Congress Against War and Fascism was at once an indication of the growth of fascism and of the struggle against it. One hall after another was booked by the organisers—and then abruptly cancelled by the lessees. Until the very last moment it was not known whether the Port Melbourne Town Hall would also be withdrawn.

Despite the uncertainty which thus surrounded the place in which the Congress would be held, despite the usual campaign of slander by the Press, despite the counter-attraction of naval and military pageants and several other Centenary side-shows, the Congress was a splendid success. No less than 250 organisations (most of them working-class) were represented. Delegates representing key war industries, such as miners, waterside workers, and boot trade workers, were present. Communists, Christians, Labour Party workers, followers of the Douglas Credit proposals, worked together in a concrete militant way, constructing a programme and method for the fight against Fascism and War. It was a magnificent reply to the flag-waving and "patriotic" military and fascist propaganda of the Centenary celebrations.

## Kisch and Griffin.

Two delegates to that Congress were prevented from taking their places in it by the direct interference of the Australian Government. Egon Erwin Kisch, delegate from the World Committee Against War and Fascism, and Gerald Griffin, representing New Zealand, were excluded from the country. The details of the events connected with the struggle which developed around the exclusion of these two men are so well known that we shall not go into them here. We are more concerned with their significance.

The Government action itself was the most blatant single indication we have yet seen of the growth of fascism in this country. The

struggle against it, carried on both legally and illegally—the landing of Griffin in defiance of authority—has been the finest expression of the gathering unity of the Australian working class and petty-bourgeoisie in the struggle against fascism.

The struggle for the liberation of Kisch has been completely successful.

The struggle for the liberation of Griffin is continuing, so that he also will leave Australia a free man.

## The Book Censorship Abolition League.

One of the most important features of the underground part of the Centenary celebrations was the increased stringency of the book censorship. The Book Censorship Abolition League was formed as a counterblast to it. We cannot as yet chronicle as full a measure of success in this branch of the struggle against fascism as in others. Valuable work has certainly been done. A Petition to the House of Representatives has been circulated,\* and meetings of various kinds, including a public debate, have been held to popularise the League and its work. The weakness has been that the appeal has been almost entirely to the petty-bourgeoisie. Certainly it is desirable that professors, lecturers, scientists, and others should support such a movement; but, as in all other branches of the struggle against fascism, success can be obtained only by united action under the militant lead of the working class.

## Australia and the New Stage of Crisis.

This then is the picture we see in Australia to-day—on the one hand confusion in economy, growing rivalry between monopoly groups reflected in the splits in the political parties which became apparent during the Federal elections and have since become more serious, growing complexity in international antagonisms reflected in Australian participation in the disintegration of the Empire (Lancashire cotton boycott, meat restrictions), on the basis of all this a speeding-up of the tempo of fascism under the mask of the Centenary celebrations; on the other hand, growing working-class unity and effective organisation to meet these conditions, progress on all fronts, but a serious weakness (which can be overcome) in the reply to the book ban.

We are often told that Australia is out of the current of developments in other parts of the world. The condition of affairs in Australia makes it impossible to accept such a statement. The features of crisis which we noted in our survey of world affairs are exactly those which we have found in Australia.

This country, like all others, faces a new stage in the general crisis of capitalism—a stage of increased class and international tension and new outbreaks of strike—the Second Round of Revolutions and Wars.

—W.S.

\*All members of the Labour Club Committee have copies of this petition, and all students are urged to make it their business to sign one.

# 1901: Lenin Honours Students

*The following article was written by Lenin for "Iskra," February, 1901.*

THE newspapers of January 11 published the official announcement of the Ministry of Education concerning the drafting into the army of 183 students of the Kiev University as a punishment for "riotous assembly." The Provisional Regulations of July 29, 1899—this menace to the student world and to society—are being put into execution less than eighteen months after their promulgation. And it seems as if the government hastens to excuse itself for applying this measure of unexampled severity by publishing an indictment in which the misdeeds of the students are painted in the blackest possible colours.

These misdeeds are worse than awful! A general students' congress was convened in the summer in Odessa to discuss a plan to organise all Russian students for the purpose of protesting against the state of affairs in academic, public, and political life. As a punishment for these criminal political designs all the student delegates were arrested and deprived of their documents. But the unrest does not subside—it grows and persists in breaking out in many higher educational institutions. The students desire to discuss and conduct their common affairs freely and independently. Their authorities—with the soulless formalism with which Russian officials have always distinguished themselves—retaliate by petty pin-pricks, and rouse the discontent of the students to the highest pitch, and automatically stimulate the thoughts of the youths who have not yet become submerged in the morass of bourgeois stagnation, to protest against the whole system of police and official tyranny.

The Kiev students demand the dismissal of a professor who took the place vacated by his colleague. The authorities resist, provoke students to convene "assemblies and demonstrations" and—give way. The students call a meeting to discuss the despicable conduct of two undergraduates—scions of wealthy families—who (so rumour has it) together had outraged a young girl. The officials sentence the principal "culprits"—for convening a meeting—to solitary confinement in the students' detention room. These refuse to submit. They are expelled. A crowd of students demonstratively accompany the expelled students to the railway station. A new meeting is called. The students remain until the evening and refuse to disperse until the rector arrives. The Vice-Governor and the chief of the gendarmerie come on the scene at the head of a detachment of troops, who surround the university and occupy the main hall. The rector is called. The students demand—a constitution perhaps? No. They demand the abolition of the punishment of solitary confinement, and the reinstatement of the expelled students. The names of the participants in the meeting are taken and then they are allowed to go home.

**P**ONDER over this astonishing lack of proportion between the modesty and innocuousness of the demands put forward by the students and

the panicky dismay of the government, which behaves as if the axe had already been laid to the pillars of the monarchy. Nothing so much exposes our "omnipotent" government as this display of consternation. By this it proves more convincingly than does any "criminal manifesto" to all those who have eyes to see and ears to hear that it realises the complete instability of its position, and that it relies only on the bayonet and the knout to save it from the indignation of the people. Decades of experience has taught the government that it is surrounded by inflammable material, and that a mere spark, a mere protest against solitary confinement, is sufficient to start a conflagration. That being the case, it is clear that the government had to make an example of the students; draft hundreds of students into the army! "Put the drill sergeant in place of Voltaire." This formula has not become obsolete; on the contrary, the twentieth century is destined to see its complete application.

This new punitive measure, new in its attempt to revive the long-obsolete past, provokes many thoughts and comparisons. Three generations ago, in the reign of Nicholas I., drafting into the army was a natural punishment entirely in keeping with the whole system of Russian serf society. Aristocrats were sent to the army so as to be compelled to serve and win their officers' spurs, and in order to curb the liberties of the nobility. The peasants were drafted into the army as a form of punishment; it was a long term of servitude, where "Green Street"\* and other forms of inhuman treatment awaited them. It is now more than a quarter of a century since "universal" military service was introduced, which at the time was acclaimed as a great democratic reform. As a matter of fact, we have not and never had universal military service, because the privileges enjoyed by birth and wealth create innumerable exceptions. As a matter of fact, we have not and never had anything resembling equality of citizens in military service. On the contrary, the barracks are completely saturated with the spirit of most revolting tyranny. . . .

**S**OME will break down under the heavy burden, will fall in combat with the military authorities; others—the feeble and flabby—will be cowed into silence by the barracks. But there will be those whom it will harden, whose outlook will be broadened, who will be compelled to ponder over and test their aspirations towards liberty. They will experience the whole weight of tyranny and oppression on their own backs when their human dignity will be placed in the hands of a drill sergeant, who very frequently takes deliberate delight in tormenting the "educated." They will see with their own eyes what the position of the common people is, their hearts will be rent by the seings of tyranny and violence that they will be compelled to witness every day, and they will

\* Running the gauntlet.—Ed.



understand that the injustices and petty tyranny from which students suffer are mere flea-bites compared with the oppression which the people are compelled to suffer. Those who will understand this will, on leaving military service, take the vow of Hannibal to fight with the vanguard of the people, the working class, for the emancipation of the whole people from despotism. . . .

The working class has already commenced the struggle for its emancipation. It must remember that this great struggle imposes a great duty upon it; that it cannot emancipate itself without emancipating the whole people from despotism; that it is its duty first and foremost to respond to every political protest, and render it every support. The best representatives of our educated classes have proved—and sealed the proof with the blood of thousands of revolutionaries, tortured to death by the government — their ability and readiness to shake from their feet the dust of bourgeois society, and march in the ranks of the Socialists. The worker who can look on indifferently while the government sends troops against the student youth is not worthy of the name of Socialist. The students came to the assistance of the workers—the workers must come to the aid of the students. . . .

The people must not let the government announcement of its punishment of the students remain unanswered.

### A GERMAN STUDENT SPEAKS.

*[I]n German Universities, since October, 1934, one year's full-time service in the Reichswehr has been included as a compulsory item in every course of study. So realistic are the military manoeuvres that tear-gas is loosed on the camps without warning in the early hours of the morning; thus efficiency in the use of gas-masks is promoted. A German student gives Hitler his reply:*

*"It is good to learn how to use rifles and machine-guns. The struggle for a true Socialism, i.e., for a workers' and peasants' government, and the overthrow of Hitler Fascism, demands soldiers who can shoot when it comes to it. In our military coats we will stand shoulder to shoulder with the workers and peasants. Out of the gorgeous phrase, 'Student and Worker Are One,' let us make a revolutionary slogan—Yes, student and worker are one in the fight against Hitler and his paymasters, in the fight against Fascist terror and the unparalleled misery and exploitation of the German people."*

—FREI JUGEND.

## A LETTER

Regent Park, London, W.1,  
29/9/34.

To the Editor of "Proletariat,"

Dear Comrade,—A friend of mine here has just shown me your Vol. 3, No. 2, issue of "Proletariat"—a fine piece of work, well-informed, pungent and vital. The publication far surpasses the sickly reform productions of this country.

I am a New Zealand architect in partnership with a Melbourne fellow—both of us some five years here, and very soon disillusioned by the petty complex of English respectability.

You are correct in your diagnosis of Mosley and Rothermere—it's worse to live here, though, in the face of open support given to these carriers by a score well-known titled manufacturers, bankers, and military failures. The apathy of English middle class climbers is not so amazing, as it is a thoroughly scientific result of a public school system far more cunningly evolved than we aggressively class-free colonials can ever realise.

The "great cause" in this country is like it is in all other capitalist fortresses—fighting forever with a one-tenth unified organisation. I am conversant with reactionary processes the world over, and, though remaining a rebel, am thoroughly and immovably convinced of the futility of our cause against them. The fearful obstacles imposed by mental training and subsequent psychological environment in England alone to me predict the history, not only of the mother country, but also of the Empire; and that history means precisely the German one—it is infallible. I needn't attempt to stress to you the differences between the Soviet accomplishment of Socialism and a similar one in a country that has had half a century of intense imperialist culture. The case for, shall we say, Spain or China, is entirely different—for you and me, unfortunately, English history is going to be all that will have any effect. The die was cast back in the middle of last century, and Marx wasn't an Englishman.

You will say I am a pessimist—I am—for the next generation at least, with a good many Vickers bullets thrown in. There is a unanimity of Press opinion to help me to be one. Even that last great organ of candid progress, "The Guardian," is veering. The sedition bill is a gauge of the national pulse, and there are men who mean that pulse to beat. The opposition is useless and playing into the murderers' hands by its very minority and localisation. To boot, Mosley procures police protection, access to every University in the land, and funds for propaganda in every district. Opposition to him is negligible. Surely such diplomacy is as far beyond working-class interference as the ape from the shrew.

And yet there are unlimited hopes—publishing firms that could exist nowhere else in the world almost, who produce cheap literature of the right kind. Get, if you can, Palme Dutt's "Fascism," at 5/—it is prohibited almost within the entire range of the Empire, but you may be lucky.

I am sincerely hard up at the moment, but will remit later for your long life and an occasional "Proletariat."

Sincerely yours,—

## AND A REPLY

Melbourne University, Carlton, N.3,

10/4/35.

Dear Comrade,—Your letter expresses so exactly the point of view of a great number of the more radical members of the petty bourgeoisie, that we have thought it desirable to reply to it in an open letter. It is particularly necessary that we should do so, because the majority of the students at our own University come from petty bourgeois families, and, when they become sympathetic towards the revolutionary movement, tend to fall into errors similar to those which we hope to persuade you that you have committed.

Thank you, first of all, for your congratulations; but we can hardly accept your sweeping condemnation of English publications. . . . "The sickly reform productions of this country," you say. Surely a country which produces the "Labour Monthly" and the "Daily Worker," to name only two, deserves no such condemnation; and if your reference is intended only for student papers, the "Student Vanguard" stands out as a refutation of it. As to your remark about the "Manchester Guardian," its history should not surprise you. It is the natural history of moneyed liberalism in a period of intensifying fascisation.

The truth of the matter is, Comrade, that you have estimated most inaccurately the condition of the class struggle, both in England and Australia, and elsewhere. Take, for example, your references to Mosley. You speak as though his movement were an isolated event, as though there were no Australian counterpart to it. But we, too, have our New Guard, our Empire Honour League, and similar open and concealed Fascist organisations. We, too, have Governments which pass legislation of a specifically anti-working-class character. Actually, during the last six months, we have witnessed tremendous attacks upon "democratic liberty" in the persecution of Kisch and Griffin, and in the increasing rigour of the censorship. Both these questions are more fully discussed elsewhere in "Proletariat." Here we would simply point out that the success of the organised working-class opposition in the Kisch case is in itself a practical refutation of your notion that the forces of reaction must prevail. Moreover, the whole struggle surely makes it quite clear that we colonials are by no means "class-free." A lack of titled aristocrats does not exempt a country from the class-struggle. Your description of the opposition to Mosley as "negligible" is very hard to understand. Even at this distance, the voices of Olympia and Hyde Park are heard shouting a denial. What is more, in England and in Australia, "military failures" are not the only representatives of national defence in the ranks of organised Fascism.

In suggesting that the English Public School system is a cunningly devised method of maintaining an attitude of complacent acceptance of the "status quo," you are, of course, correct; but in implying that other countries are not similarly served, you are wrong. In all capitalist countries, education necessarily serves the interests of the dominant class. It is a powerful tool used by this class to shape all members of society according to its pattern. Of course, in each country there are variations in social and economic conditions, which lead to slight differences in the pattern and in the machinery which reproduces it. Only in a truly "class-free" society, a society such as Soviet Russia and Soviet China are building, can education be used to develop to the full the ability of the individual.

To return once more to your pessimism—the fact that unity in the revolutionary movement has not yet been achieved in England or Australia does not mean that it cannot be achieved. Here in Australia to-day, the united front proposals of the Communist Party are being received enthusiastically by rank and file Labour Party workers, and experience in France, Spain, Austria, etc., has shown very clearly that even the most reactionary reformist bureaucrats must yield eventually to mass pressure from below. In pointing to the examples of these other countries we are not ignoring your statements as to the unique position of Great Britain. It is true that every year British Imperialism uses its schools, its radio, its arts, to pump capitalist culture into its people; and this does increase the difficulties of revolutionary work. But . . . mass starvation, increasing unemployment, rationalisation, decreasing standards of living, teach a sharper lesson than that which is taught by a decaying culture.

You predict Fascism in the British Empire for a generation at least, but claim the case to be entirely different for, say, China or Spain. But isn't the situation in India more like that in China than like that in England? What would be the condition in England if this main source of colonial super-profits were stopped by revolutionary action? But there are many circumstances which can produce a revolutionary situation—in England as in any other capitalist country. It is only if such a revolutionary situation is let slip, i.e., if there is no organised vanguard of the working-class to seize that moment and lead the workers to power, that Fascism will come.

It is the task of class-conscious intellectuals, such as yourself—and us—to join the workers who are building that vanguard. "The opposition is useless and playing into the murderers' hands by its very minority and localisation." On the contrary, Comrade, the opposition is not only driving back the Fascist forces, it is building in the struggle the leaders of the proletarian revolution. There is no country in which Bolshevik action cannot make conditions serve the workers' end.

Greetings—

THE EDITORS.

# Cinema and Capitalism

## Introduction.

**I**NTO its short life, the cinema has compressed a development that the older arts have taken centuries to attain. Its scope is at least as wide as that of the printed word; for cinema includes not only the narrative film that constitutes the bulk of commercial production, but also the abstract film, the documentary film, the educational film, the news-reel, the animated cartoon, and their various permutations and combinations.

The cinema is not only an art, but a vast entertainment industry, an important field for capitalist exploitation.

Treatment of so manifold a subject within the space of a short article must be of a most general nature; statements made are necessarily compressed and dogmatic; in addition, my enthusiasm for film-art leads me to enter on controversial matters, to make statements with which many will not wish to agree.

For these things, make allowances.

## Cinema

### The Film is the Supreme Art.

The most obvious characteristic of the film is that it appeals directly to the eye and ear, the senses through which our knowledge of the universe is chiefly derived. The film, more than any other medium, is capable of giving an exact representation of the external world as it appears to our senses. In a few short years this will be even more true, for by then colour photography and stereoscopy will have reached a state of development as perfect as that reached by non-colour photography and sound recording to-day. There are many reasons why the film is capable of giving a more exact representation of the external world than any other form of art.

Cinema is essentially dynamic, a fact which is emphasised by its very name; it deals with images in a state of constant change, and continual flow. "Everything is and is not, for everything is fluid, is constantly changing, constantly coming into being and passing away."

The film for the first time gives adequate release to that fundamental love of physical movement that is expressed only in rudimentary form in the dance, pantomime, and drama.

It gives to images a fluidity only previously possessed by music. "Plainly we have something here that can be raised to parallelism with the greatest musical compositions; we have possibilities of a spectacle equal to any music that has been or can be written, comprehending indeed the completist music as one of its factors." (H. G. Wells.)

By the process of editing or montage, the dynamic images of the film are juxtaposed and made

to reinforce and to conflict with each other. In this way tremendous intensification and compression are achieved.

Not only does the film represent the things and processes of the external world exactly as they appear to the mind; it also has the power of presenting exactly the ideas, ever-changing, ever-conflicting, which reflect these things and processes. The film at last emancipates us from symbolism, from the necessity of translating ideas into symbols and back again into ideas, for purposes of communication. It frees us from that petrification of ideas, which is a dangerously easy consequence of casting them into the mould of words; that petrification which leads to metaphysical modes of reasoning. The film moreover is capable, whether by means of crosscutting, mixes, or composite shots, of developing several ideas simultaneously.

Cinema . . . "comprehends things and their representations, ideas, in their essential connection, concatenation, motion, origin, and ending."

In short, the dialectical materialist, who gives even a cursory consideration to the properties of cinema, is led inescapably to the conclusion that in it we have at last a completely dialectical form of expression, and hence the supreme form of expression.

This proposition seems to me at once so simple, so irrefutable, and so immense in its implications that I cannot excuse the ignorance that still surrounds the film, manifested at its mildest as a tendency to treat the film as an art form still on trial; at its worst as a vulgar hostility.

### The Film Will Largely Supplant the Older Arts.

Since the film expresses itself with the very stuff of ideas, it is destined largely to supplant the older arts, at the same time absorbing the valuable features of each.

This statement should not be controversial, provided that my previous argument has been accepted; nevertheless, it deserves further discussion. Let us see how far it applies to the film's present state.

Consider first the drama. Only the sentimental reactionary who senses a mystical virtue in "flesh and blood drama" will deny or regret that the film has swept away all the limitations of time and space, and all the tiresome subterfuges that mar stage-drama. For instance, it does away with the business of "getting people on, and getting them off," which (in the words of H. G. Wells) "is a vast and laborious part of dramatic technique." At the same time there is no valuable form of expression so peculiar to the drama that it cannot be appropriated by the film.

Since the cinema's appeal is primarily pictorial, it has also much in common with the static

pictorial arts, that have annexed to themselves the name of ART. The principles of design evolved in painting and sculpture, serve as valuable guides in the design of the filmic image. But the dynamic character of the cinema gives it a freedom and power that is not possessed by ART. Principles of static design must be greatly modified in the film, and principles of dynamic design evolved in their place.

How far may the film in its present stage replace literary expression?

For purely descriptive purposes, for statement of specific objective fact, the film is unrivalled. A scene, an action, a process, may be presented on the screen accurately, concisely, and vividly, in a fraction of the time necessary for verbal description.

The film is, of course, not confined to statement of objective fact. There is no conception capable of visualisation by the novelist, which cannot be realised on the film, however fantastic, complex, or vast it may be. Witness the mechanical ingenuity of "The Invisible Man," "King Kong," "Alice in Wonderland," etc.; recall any film which depicts huge crowd or battle scenes, or natural cataclysms.

The film's power of describing mental processes is still largely untapped. Pudovkin's "Mechanism of the Brain," made in 1925, in conjunction with workers in Pavlov's laboratory, remains still a comparatively isolated effort. To it, however, must be added Pabst's "Secrets of the Soul," a narrative film made with the help of Freud, and illustrating very powerfully the principles of Freudian psycho-analysis. Minor examples of the film's capacity to show the workings of the subconscious mind were seen last year in the delightful dream-fantasies that gave distinction to the Pommer-Martin-U.F.A. film "Happy Ever After" and Henry King's "Carolina." Filmic duplication of the functions of memory and imagination is, of course, a commonplace, i.e., it is seen in the flash-back and the "flash-forward."

The film can alter its point of view with even greater facility than the novel. It can see, now with the eyes of an observer, now with those of any one of the protagonists. It not only sees, but "feels" as the protagonist or the spectator, e.g., Pudovkin instances a case where "the camera sees with eyes of a beaten boxer rendered dizzy by a blow."

It must be admitted that the film, at present, usually expresses thoughts and emotions by means of externals; by behavioristic details, environment, camera treatment, and editing. By means of the close-up, for instance, the film may impart intensified expression to a lifted eyebrow, a pulsing artery, a clenched fist, or an inanimate object. The mood of a scene may also be powerfully influenced by the setting, by lighting, and by the position and movement of the camera. More important still, relational editing gives power to shots inexpressive by themselves. The director who finds himself unable adequately to express a thought in visual (or sound) images, can still go one better than the writer, by means of the "Strange Interlude" device of spoken words.

The film is, as yet, clumsy in comparison with literature, when it seeks to make a summarised statement, or to deal with generalised conceptions. The film-director who wishes to extend the range of his art must continually seek to formalise the ideas implied by such words as "capitalism," "proletariat," "love," "hate," and so on, and thus to express generalised ideas in filmic terms.

But if it is true that many ideas are at present better expressed verbally than filmically, it is also true that the film has opened up avenues of expression previously inaccessible to literature, as well as the other arts; it is true that in regions of thought where the film and literature are comparable, the film is tremendously more powerful, and that it is continually extending its boundaries. And the only limits to those boundaries are the limitations of human thought.

Surely, one of the most fascinating aspects of the film is the almost daily advance in expressiveness, continuing the evolution that has been compressed into its brief history of a quarter-century as an art.

But, in contemplating the future of the film, we need not be apologetic for its present achievements. If we agree that the purpose of art is the communication of ideas as lucidly and powerfully as possible, we must admit that many of the films of the present day are, at least, on the same plane as the classics of the older arts. We must also admit that the film has all the properties which are necessary to enable it to absorb the other arts and transform them into a higher synthesis.

## The Fundamental Properties of the Film.

In America, the film had its birth, and from America came the beginnings of almost all the expressive technique of the film. Notably is this so in the remarkable early work of D. W. Griffith, such as the "Birth of a Nation" and "Intolerance." Griffith it was who first realised the power of editing, and was responsible for many filmic devices, such as the close-up, iris-shot, fade, soft-focus, and so on. And Griffith's impulse has made itself felt in the later work of American directors, and indeed throughout the world.

From Germany has come a realisation of the value of environmental setting and filmic design, and the expressive use of mixes and superimposed shots. In Germany, too, was developed much of the film's power of psychological expression. German directors realised also the expressive value of camera angles and camera movement, and the freedom they gave to the camera was eagerly seized upon by the Americans with their greater technical equipment.

From France has come much interesting independent work in the abstract film, the surrealist film, and the welding of film and music.

But, chiefly because directors in capitalistic countries are under the control of a profit-making economy, they have made very little conscious evaluation of filmic properties. The work of such

directors seems to have been largely instinctive; at any rate they have not expressed the principles on which it is based. Pabst, Clair, D. W. Griffith, Chaplin, Lubitsch, von Stroheim, have given us almost no expositions of the principles of film-art, whether in filmic or literary form.

Only in Soviet Russia has there been consistent and conscious investigation of the fundamental properties of the film.

Kuleshov started from the simple proposition that "in every art there must be firstly a material, and secondly a method of composing this material specially adapted to this art." Kuleshov and Pudovkin, having considered the work of American directors, and in particular that of D. W. Griffith, and having made their own experiments, arrived at the conclusion that the material in film work is the strips of film on which the action before the camera is recorded, and the method of composing this material is their joining together in a particular, creatively discovered order.

The action of the film must be analysed into its separate components, and the task of the director is the building-up ("montage") of the film strips containing these elements, in the correct sequence, governed solely by the laws of thought, in the correct length, so as to establish that all-important filmic rhythm, and using appropriate transition devices. Thus the director creates a filmic space and filmic time differing from real space and real time.

These propositions, briefly, constitute the basis of the theory of montage of the Russian left wing filmic school, the theory which has had such tremendous results in the hands of those giants, Pudovkin and Eisenstein, as well as in the hands of lesser directors; results such as "Battleship Potemkin," "The End of St. Petersburg," "October," "Mother," "Storm Over Asia," "The General Line."

It has been left to Eisenstein in recent years to emphasise the correspondence of filmic expression with Marxian dialectic, which was already implicit in the theories of the left-wing group.

The Soviet film-artists have justified Lenin's initial confidence in the film as a medium for sociological propaganda. Consider the reasons why it has such power in this respect.

The film for the first time gives expression to the crowd, which in literature and the drama appears as an inarticulate, amorphous thing. Its capacity for wide panoramas, makes great crowd scenes a feature of the cinema. But the camera can also observe details, it can pick out typical components of the mass, and by the process of montage it enables the spectator to share in a flash the various thoughts and emotions of typical individuals of the crowd. Thus the crowd receives a manifold, heightened individuality, since it is compounded of the emotions of many.

The film's ability to reproduce with "remorseless realism" the smallest detail, and to exclude irrelevant details, coupled with its capacity for vivid and rapid statement, enables it if need be to speak with a force that is irresistible and hammer-like.

Together with the fact that the film gives expression to the masses, must be considered the fact that it also speaks to the masses. Here, at

last, is an art with a universal appeal. The film speaks, not to a coterie, but to all. Its vast audience is something unique in history. The writer communicates with thousands, the film director's audience is numbered in millions (e.g., Chaplin's potential audience is estimated at 300,000,000).

## ... and Capitalism

What has Capitalism made of this medium, whose possibilities as an art and as a medium for propaganda and education are so great?

In considering this, we must remember, firstly, that the cost of film production places the film-artist peculiarly under the control of the capitalist; secondly, the tremendous market for films makes their production, distribution, and exhibition a huge industry (fourth industry in U.S.A.). But surely a very strange industry—one full of the queerest illogicalities and exaggerations.

## Opium for the People.

In speaking of the capitalist film, I refer chiefly to Hollywood, because here it is seen in its most typical form. Also, the Hollywood product comprises almost all the films seen in Australia, British films being but inferior imitations of Hollywood.

To supply its vast market, Hollywood has ransacked the world for its "wage laborers," in the shape of directors, camera-men, technicians, writers, scenarists, composers, and actors. And all these wage-laborers are regimented into the production of entertainment commodities for the world, Chaplin being almost alone in his ability to follow his own artistic inclinations.

Some of Hollywood's employees fight continuously, and with partial success, against its production methods; a few are able to break away into independent production now and then; many adjust themselves to the system with great strain, but most have few scruples about taking part in the lucrative game of "selling the public what it wants"; in other words, selling the wage-earners and the salaried workers of the world what finance-capital is trying to make them want—a narcotic, a weekly escape from the realities of bourgeois society.

And so these narcotics are supplied in quantities, in the shape of standardised adventure films, slick comedies, lavish song and dance shows, and sentimental melodramas.

But whatever the type of film, it must always be modified to reach as wide a market as possible. The melodrama must have comic relief, and the adventure-film a love interest, no matter how irrelevant. A "happy ending" is tacked on to the logical "unhappy ending." The film must also supply the erotic release rendered necessary by bourgeois social conventions.

But whatever happens in the course of the film, these bourgeois social conventions must always be placated in the last few feet; virtue must be rewarded and vice destroyed; the "abandoned woman" must reform or receive her deserts; the

gangster must die a noble death or be overtaken by the "forces of law and order."

And the film must pander to other myths of the bourgeois state. So we have the myth of equality of opportunity; business success is lauded as the supreme goal; the chorus-girl becomes a star, and so on.

Life in the film-world moves smoothly through gilded decors; there is no poverty, no sign of the class-struggle here.

A social problem, if seriously stated, is given the individualist solution that is no solution.

A film seriously criticising existing society is unthinkable unless, in rare cases, box office considerations render it possible.

To the fact that the theme of the film is conditioned by bourgeois ideology, is added the obstacle of the star system, which subordinates ideas to the exploitation of a personality that is generally non-existent.

And even that considerable body of films to which the above sweeping generalisations do not apply, is again and again marred by concessions to "the box office." The film-artist must fight continually against the demands of the producing company.

Hollywood film production becomes more and more departmentalised. To supply the ever hungry market, novels, plays and musical comedies are seized upon, as well as scenarios. These must pass through the hands of scenarists, dialogue writers, producers, directors, and editors, emerging after weird and uncoordinated processes as botched apologies for films.

There is no training for the film-artist under Capitalism. He must discover the principles of his art slowly, by trial and error, instinctively, by rule of thumb. Nor, of course, is he at liberty to make any artistic experiments. The abstract and documentary films must remain unexplored, while he continues to churn out the most obvious kind of narrative film.

But when his capitalist masters have decided that it will pay them to have an addition to the technical resources of the film, in the form of sound, then the film director must hasten to comply with their demands. The public must have talking pictures—not only that, but 100 per cent. TALKIES! But that is not enough—they must have ALL TALKING, SINGING, and DANCING pictures! And each must talk and sing and dance more violently than the last. The painfully discovered principles of the silent film must be instantly jettisoned, the film must go back to its infancy, and subordinate itself to the outworn conventions of stage-drama and musical comedy. Then there must ensue a long process of recovery while the director, in between production work, endeavors to formulate methods of treatment of sound.

And we may be certain that much the same retrogression will occur when the owners of Hollywood decide on the wholesale introduction of colour photography. The Hollywood director is not free to exercise his aesthetic judgment. He is enslaved to his employer's ideas of box-office demands.

But having suggested how film-art is hampered by Hollywood, I must emphasise that Hollywood cannot be dismissed so easily.

One is forced to admire the technical proficiency of Hollywood films; the efficient settings, good lighting, fine camera work, competent acting, and clever directions common to all films, factors which often give interest to the paltriest theme. Their very lavishness is not to be ignored, or the exhaustive research and expenditure that ensures accuracy in the minutest details of environment.

There is quite a large class of films, which though not great art, are clever entertainment. I confess to a delight in Disney's fantasies, that is not entirely due to their technical interest. Hollywood, also, produces a number of charming and innocuous idylls of domestic and small-town life, and from its annual crop there emerge a few films that I would defend as good art. Often, a gleam of a sociological truth breaks through, and now and then masterpieces such as "Street Scene," "All Quiet," "I Am a Fugitive."

## Censorship.

Hampered as the film is by capitalist production methods, we must seek the major obstacle in Capitalism's more direct attack—the censorship. The cinema is being throttled by restrictions, such as no other art has had to endure under bourgeois "democracy." The Australian censorship, besides banning scores of films yearly, makes cuts in more than half the feature films, for the most trivial reasons. And these eliminations, since they destroy rhythm, are far more serious than would be the tearing out of pages and blacking-out of passages in half the books entering the country.

Film censorship everywhere acts on the assumption that the film must be used only as opium for the masses. "The cinema screen is not the place for treatment of intimate biological, pathological, and political subjects" is the typical attitude. Consideration will show that the object of censorship is not primarily the prevention of "lascivious" and "immoral" subjects; but the ruthless suppression of any serious criticism of those mighty bulwarks of bourgeois society: religion, marriage, and the family.

But it is in regard to political subjects that censorship is seen at its worst. I can do no better than quote from reports of the British Board of Film Censors. The board forbids films dealing with strikes, it forbids "stories and scenes which are calculated and possibly intended to ferment social unrest and discontent"; it forbids "scenes depicting the forces of order firing on an unarmed populace"; it forbids "stories showing any antagonistic or strained relations between white men and the coloured population of the British Empire" . . . but there is no need to continue. These quotations, typical also of the attitude of Australian and other censorship authorities, show that the film has been suffering Fascist repression for years. It is not surprising that Capitalism should have enchained so powerful a medium; what is surprising is that it has been allowed to do so without protest from that body of opinion which has ensured some measure of intellectual freedom in literature. And here I am not attacking only social democrats, liberals,

rationalists, and free thinkers; I cannot exempt Marxists from the charge of indifference.

But it is where Capitalism appears as an open dictatorship, as Fascism, that the fate of the film has been most tragic. Fascism has destroyed the artistic traditions of the German film, at its zenith an equal of the Soviet film. Such films as "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," "Warning Shadows," "Vaudeville," "The Last Laugh," "Metropolis," "Secrets of the Soul," "Du Dreigroschenoper," "The White Hell of Pitz Palu," "Kameradschaft," are no more, and Germany's finest film-artists have been exiled, including the greatest of them, Pabst.

## Conclusion.

Consider this art form, enchained by profit-making, bourgeois ideology and Fascist repres-

sion, and then turn to the films of Soviet Russia, where the film artist has something vital to express, and is able to express it with all the power at his command, by reason of his aesthetic background, his training, and his freedom to investigate the properties of his art; factors which have won for the Soviet film a pre-eminence recognised not only by Communists but by every bourgeois critic.

In conclusion, the facts that filmic expression is dialectical expression, that the film is the most powerful of propaganda media, that it has played a major part in Soviet Socialist construction—these facts demand that the film receives that intense study that has not yet been given to it by Communists outside the U.S.S.R., or by members of the M.U. Labour Club.

—K. COLDICUTT.

# Crisis in Science

THE twenty-third meeting of the "Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science" was held in Melbourne during the University Long Vacation. At the Congress were present about 1000 persons engaged in scientific and (in some cases) allegedly scientific occupations. The meetings were not limited to specialised discussions, many statements on the general relations of science and society being made. An examination of typical statements made at the Congress will show very clearly what is the present state of the "advancement of science."

"Inventions threaten industrial stability, with increasing elimination of waste and rationalisation of industry." — (Sir George Julius.)

"The maladjustment of the Australian economic structure is very grave. We have no plan for rectifying it." — (Professor Giblin.)

"We have no plan." "inventions threaten industrial stability"; this is the foundation upon which science is standing to-day. On all sides are heard suggestions to slow down the development of science to allow society to readjust itself. A growing lack of confidence in scientific achievement is shown, which is due, not to any disbelief in the power of science to understand and control the physical world, but to fear of the result of scientific achievement on "industrial stability."

The growing feeling of antagonism to science was revealed in the press. The "Age," in an editorial during the Congress, after stating that science reached its apotheosis a generation ago, made the remark:—

"There is an occasional impulsive wish that science might take back her favors, and let mankind revert to the old simplicity and security."

The present owners of the machinery of industry are certainly endeavoring to make science take back some of her favors. The present economic system, in which goods are produced not in order to meet the needs of the human race, but in order to bring profit to the tiny minority which owns them, has broken down. In its heyday this economic system offered huge stimulus to the development of science. Its competitive nature initiated a colossal race for the improvement of technique. Money was poured into scientific research from industry, because the owners of industry knew that the study of general scientific problems led to very practical results, and that expenditure on so-called "pure" science was a very profitable investment.

The technical advances resulting from scientific knowledge had in turn a powerful effect on the development of science. P. M. S. Blackett, the well-known Cambridge physicist, stated recently that:—

"The reason for the rapidity of advance of modern physics . . . is to a considerable extent due to the technical aids made available by industry."

The application of science to the problems of industry has in turn reacted on general scientific progress. For example, the X-ray study of the structure of wool has led to a new knowledge of the properties of protein molecules.

Because of the relationship between science and industrial needs, the owners of the machinery of

production determine the development of science; and under the present economic system the purpose of the application of science to industry is not to increase the general well-being of humanity, but to increase the profits of the owners of industry.

For this reason the results of science are applied only when it is profitable to do so. When cheap labour and shrinking markets make it unprofitable, scientific discoveries are coolly shelved. Examples are numerous, but we may take rubber as typical. Rubber can be made synthetically, but it is much cheaper for Capitalism to use the natural product, because of the abundance of black, semi-slave labour. The wages of this labour are adjusted so as to be just sufficient to keep a reasonable percentage of the natives from dying of starvation. The profits from this black labour are sufficiently great to enable one American rubber combine to spend over one million pounds per annum on propaganda against synthetic rubber. The result is that use of synthetic rubber is restricted to the Soviet Union, where production is for use and not for profit.

The tendency to obstruct technical progress becomes more pronounced as capital becomes concentrated and monopolies formed. This for two reasons: Firstly, monopoly companies are more easily able to buy up technical discoveries in order to shelve them; and, secondly, the concentration of capital brings mass poverty and devastating crises, and consequently a shrinking market. This second reason has two effects. It cheapens labour-power, and consequently much work that it would formerly have paid the capitalist to have done by machines now pays him better if done by cheap man-labor. Again, in the face of the shrinking market, the owners of industry frequently find it inexpedient to make large outlays on improving the technique of production.

With the growth of monopolies, the buying up of technical discoveries and the shelving of them becomes the order of the day. It has been calculated by the economic magazine, "Iron Age," that by putting all the industrial plants in the United States upon the level of modern technique, it would be possible to shorten the working day to three hours, and at the same time double the output. But this is impossible under capitalism, which finds it profitable to support obsolete plants, to buy out patents, to shelve innovations that threaten depreciation of old capital stock.

The effect of the crisis on scientific achievement is two-fold. On the one hand, there is a movement in favor of throwing overboard the fruits of science in order to restore sections of the community to a primitive mode of existence. Examples are seen in the "back to the Hand-Loom" movement of Ghandi, and the scheme of Professor Giblin for self-supporting peasant communities in Australia.

On the other hand, we have the direct effect on the scientist himself. We see scientists becoming more detached from reality, taking up studies as speculative, and as remote from practical application, as possible; such as, for example, the theories of the internal constitution of the stars and the habits of deep-sea fishes. With this is seen a return to mysticism and religion, such as

was expressed by Professor O. U. Vonwiller, at the Science Congress:—

"More important than the many recent remarkable advances in the knowledge of physics is the change in the philosophical outlook of the physicist brought about by difficulties in reconciling the new knowledge with established theories and modes of thought. These modern developments have a bearing on religion which cannot be ignored, and here too is to be found promise of the resolution of past difficulties, without a sacrifice of essential faith."

We wonder that the worthy Professor did not mention recent experiments described in the science magazine, "Nature," in which scientists claimed that by use of the "Wilson track" method the path of the spirit of a dying mouse could be seen, other observers remarking that the tracks were apparently visible only to the eye of faith.

Despite the two-fold effect of the crisis of capitalism, scientific research is still being carried on. It is, however, becoming chiefly concerned with war preparations. Much of it is secret, a fact noted by Julian Huxley, in a recent survey of British science:—

"In one government aided institution I was told that it would be against national industrial interests even to let it be known that a lot of research was being carried on, much less to describe any of it!"

Huxley showed that research in the war industries was in a flourishing condition, the British government spending on war-research an amount equal to its entire expenditure in all other branches of scientific work. During February, a conference of leading scientists was convened in London to discuss how science could be brought even more into the service of war.

In addition to the government's expenditure on scientific research for war, an incalculable amount is being spent directly by the armament combines. Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd., for instance, one of the biggest trusts in Britain, the company which is in the forefront of war-preparations all over the Empire, carries on world-wide scientific research. Thus Sir John Cadman was sent to Australia in October to investigate the possibilities of the uneconomical production of oil from shale for war supplies. The University of Melbourne recognised his work by conferring on him an honorary degree. So science experts are used and rewarded.

The delegates at the Physics Section of the Science Congress were impressed by the equipment of the laboratories at the Maribyrnong munitions factory, and also by the quantity and the variety of work being undertaken. The number of scientific research workers employed at Maribyrnong has been increasing rapidly for some time, but now the tempo has risen sharply. During February, a new set of applications was invited from metallurgy and chemistry graduates from our University. The number of research workers for Maribyrnong Munitions is being doubled. This expansion is going on simultaneously with the cutting down of research grants to students working in the University laboratories.



This is the present position of science. Most of the scientists at the Congress revealed an awareness of the futility of their work. Some of them had a sense of impending catastrophe. Thus in his lecture on unemployment, Sir George Julius said:—

**"Unemployment is not merely a temporary phenomenon associated with a phase of the trade cycle, but is a permanent feature of such magnitude that if no remedy is found we must expect a world-wide conflagration of the first magnitude."**

But not one of the scientists showed any perception of how to free science from its present fetters. One after another they expressed pessimism, mysticism, futility, warning, fear. Dr. Dühig offered a solution — a solution that is believed by a large number of scientists and which illustrates the confusion of thought existing in the minds of bourgeois scientists as a result of their isolation from the practical work of society. Dr. Dühig's speech raised the greatest amount of press comment. After discussing the crisis in the medical profession, he attacked the present parliamentary system. The State, he said, cannot be conducted "by unsuccessful grocers and punctilious legalists." If scientists were in control of affairs they would be enabled to make a systematic plan for an attack on human problems.

Dr. Dühig blames the stupidity of parliamentarians for the economic crisis. Such an outlook is dangerous in its confusion. Has the doctor not learned that the stupidity of parliamentarians is not the cause of the economic chaos, but its reflection; that the policy of parliament does not spring from the minds of parliamentarians, but is dictated by finance-capital? Has he not learned from the examples of Germany, Italy, Austria, Spain, that the economic crisis ultimately forces finance-capital to attempt to dispense with the party framework in order to establish the open terrorist dictatorship of finance capital? Does he know that demagogic outbursts against "unsuccessful grocers" and "punctilious legalists" are part of the stock-in-trade of Fascist propagandists, and that to speak of systematic planning under Capitalism is also playing into the hands of the Fascist demagogues? Does he think that a Fascist dictatorship will solve the crisis of science? If so, he would be wise to study the onslaughts made on science in Germany under the Hitler régime. In his gibe at unsuccessful grocers, Dr. Dühig reveals an intellectual snobbery that is only equalled by his ignorance of the causes of the failure of small shopkeepers. It is not any lack of ability, as the doctor would imply, but the growth of monopolies—chain-stores, etc.—that is squeezing out the small man and driving him on the labour-market.

The attempted solution of the crisis of science as expressed by Dr. Dühig, shows the scientist in the fetters of Capitalism, struggling for freedom, doing everything, except the obvious thing—bursting the fetters, throwing in his weight with the working-class, the only force that can destroy Capitalism.

Some of the younger scientists have already taken this step; every day more are doing so.

The progress of science in the Soviet Union, standing in sharp contrast to the paralysis of science in the Capitalist world, draws their attention. No greater contrast to the Melbourne Science Congress could exist than the Soviet Union delegation to the London Science Congress in 1931. The papers read by members of this delegation reveal with vividness the well-grounded optimism and the scientific power that have developed in the Soviet Union. Thus Bukharin, prominent member of the Moscow Academy of Sciences, reported:—

**"One can feel with one's own hands how the development of Socialist agriculture pushes forward the development of genetics, biology generally; how the exceptionally insistent need for the study of geological research pushes forward geology, geochemistry, etc. This shows the poverty of the idea that the 'utility' of science means its degradation. Great practice requires great theory. Gradually destroying the division between intellectual and physical labor, Socialism fuses theory and practice in the heads of millions. It is not only a new economic system which has been born. A new culture has been born. A new science has been born. A new style of life has been born."**

Scientific planning, impossible under Capitalism, is an accomplished fact in the Soviet Union. This was shown in the report of M. Rubinstein, Professor at the Institute of Economics, Moscow:

**"The whole network of research activity in industry is working in conformity with a single plan. The first Scientific Research Planning Conference, which was attended by over 1000 delegates from scientific organisations in all branches of science and technology, investigated the most essential problems confronting the research workers, outlined the methodology of planning in this domain, appealed to all scientists and scientific workers to join in the working out of this plan."**

Scientists cannot remain indifferent to the progress of science in the Soviet Union, the mass enthusiasm behind science, the enormous increase in the amount of research done (in 1930 the Soviet Union spent as much on a single geophysical survey as was spent in the whole of Europe on scientific research during that year), and the immediate application of scientific discoveries for the purpose of raising the living standard of the workers.

The capitalist class endeavors to prevent these facts from reaching us. There is a keen demand here at the University for scientific papers published in the U.S.S.R., but they are inaccessible to research students. This forces on us the necessity of strengthening our demand until we get this material which is indispensable if we are to understand the latest developments in science, and if we are to understand also the cause of the crisis in science, and how to end it.

—W. CHRISTIANSEN.

# STUDENT NOTES: THE

SINCE the last issue of "Proletariat," the reactionary forces at the University have revealed themselves. The "Melbourne University Magazine" has been censored, and the University Council against War disaffiliated. The University, also, by the part it played in the Centenary celebrations, has revealed itself as an integral, jingoistic, and pretentious part of the capitalist state machinery.

All individuals and institutions which support the policy of the ruling class to-day are condemned to play an increasingly reactionary rôle. This very fact marshals increasing numbers against them. With the growth of reaction in the University, the forces opposed to reaction have also grown. The future of our University will be determined by which forces grow the faster. The workers of Australia are mobilising against fascism; they are winning victories (the freeing of Kisch). Our future lies in recognising them as the dominant force in the fight against reaction and our place by their side. Our future lies in recognising that failure to fight against every evidence of reaction will mean the temporary victory of fascism in Australia—and in our University that viciousness and vulgarity which is the fascist substitute for culture.

## "M.U.M." Censored.

In the last issue of "Proletariat" it was pointed out how the abolition of the Publications Advisory Board by the Students' Representative Council (S.R.C.) put the censorship of the "Melbourne University Magazine" into the hands of the S.R.C. itself. The course of events soon made clear the significance of this.

At the end of term, on the evening before the proofs of "M.U.M." were to be sent to the printer, the editor submitted them to the President of the S.R.C. for censorship. He evidently anticipated that the examination would be a summary business, a mere matter of formality. The President, however, took the material, and, after keeping it for the evening, gave his decision that "owing to the predominance of communistic matter the magazine was not generally acceptable." Having reached this personal conclusion, he made no attempt to place the subject before a meeting of the S.R.C. and take a vote. In the typical manner of a reactionary, he kept the matter within the small clique that formed the S.R.C. executive. This clique agreed not to refer to the students for decision, but to place the matter before the "unbiased" judgment of the Chairman of the Professorial Board and the University Registrar (who had two years previously encouraged the throwing of a Labour Club member into the University lake, and whose activities against the University Council against War will be outlined later).

The editor made it known that the proofs were being held up, and the Labour Club immediately

called a protest meeting. Term was nearly at an end; nevertheless, a large number of students attended. The editor put his case (referred to in "Some Censored Australian Literature," elsewhere in this issue). The Secretary of the Labour Club also put the case, this time from the point of view of the Labour Club. By protesting against the censorship of "M.U.M.," he said, the Labour Club took no responsibility for its contents, most of which were unknown to it. The Labour Club led the protest of the students solely on the ground that the action of the S.R.C. executive was a gross infringement of student rights. The meeting was completely in agreement with him.

Nevertheless, over the head of this general student meeting, the Chairman of the Professorial Board and the University Registrar reached their decision. Two articles were to be banned from "M.U.M." — one dealing with the conditions in Melbourne public hospitals, the other a critical review of a prescribed University reference book. The latter article is also printed elsewhere in this issue.

Term had by this time come to an end. It was impossible (temporarily) to continue the protests. No doubt the President of the S.R.C. had taken this into consideration when he censored the magazine. The editor of "M.U.M." should have replied to this by holding over the proofs of the magazine during the long vacation so that the students' protests could have been continued at the beginning of this academic year. "M.U.M." should have been published intact. The editor, however, obeyed the censors—and thus yielded an inch to the advance of reaction.

The editorship of "M.U.M." has this year passed into the hands of last year's S.R.C. President. In 1932 this student was editor of "Farrago." The use he made of his position will be clear from the following extracts, typical of editorials when the paper was in his control:—

"Any group which advocates war, bloodshed, violence, and crime must be stamped out of existence. A doctrine of cold-blooded murder is being vomited through the University. Red revolution is being extolled."

"Why should we not meet projected violence with force and crush these propagandists out of a community of 2000 which is being disturbed by a collection of at most 50 communists. . . . This cannot continue. Even a New Guard would be acceptable."

"Force is suggested. Remember, tolerant reader, that you have to deal with the prototypes of those who will kick from the back ranks in the Utopian street fight of revolution. . . . Frankly, we are tired of them. We leave the remedy to you."

Yet the person responsible for these statements was hypocritical enough to give as his reason for censoring "M.U.M.": "To permit the publication of a magazine which could be criticised as being politically partisan would be a misappropriation of students' funds."

# HT AGAINST REACTION

The first number of "M.U.M." under his editorship has yet to appear; we can already warn him, however, against doing with it what he did with "Farrago"—in his own words, against a misappropriation of students' funds.

## "Student Affairs."

Faced with increasing difficulty in having its views expressed in the general University papers, the Labour Club is forced to develop its own organs of communication with the students. It intends, therefore, to produce "Proletariat" regularly every three months, and has at the same time started a regular fortnightly news-sheet, "Student Affairs." The purpose of this news-sheet is to deal with the cultural and economic problems of the students, and to give expression to the reflection in our University of the increasing international and class tension which is the most vital characteristic of the world of which we and our University are a part.

## Council Against War Disaffiliated.

It was not the student-body, but the executive of the S.R.C. (with the assistance of the Registrar, and at the instigation of outside business men), that worked for the disaffiliation of the C.A.W. One instance of their method of activity will suffice to make this clear.

A few days after the August 1st procession, the University Registrar received an official letter from the committee of the C.A.W., in which it was pointed out to him that he was the most suitable person to deny the charge made by the editor of the "Argus" that the committee of the C.A.W. was guilty of falsehood, and in which it was also pointed out to him that the charge made by the "Argus" editor reflected discredit not only on the C.A.W. but on the whole University. He was therefore asked to write to the "Argus" upholding the statements which the editor had said were false. He did not do so. After a few days he notified the committee of the C.A.W.: "I don't propose to write to the 'Argus.' So far as I remember what I saw, I don't think they stated that I gave any directions to your Council against War." This, despite the fact that the official letter referred him to the "Argus" of August 2nd for the report.

At the subsequent meeting of the S.R.C., the matter of the editor's libellous charge was brought forward by members who proposed that the S.R.C. should send an official letter to the press supporting the truth of the statements made by the Committee of the C.A.W. A majority of members of the S.R.C. agreed to this proposal, and instructed the president, the secretary, and one other member of the Council to draft the letter and forward it to the various dailies. The president and the secretary wilfully disobeyed these instructions.

The various steps and stages by which they subsequently succeeded in getting a majority of the Council to agree that it would have been "in-discreet" to have sent the letter, and to agree also that the affiliation of the C.A.W. to the S.R.C. was "both undignified to the S.R.C. and generally ludicrous"—will not be gone into here. Suffice it to say that no more tangible reason for the disaffiliation of the C.A.W. was given than that stated here.

The C.A.W.'s protests against these attacks, and its exposure of them, drew support from increasing numbers of students. The C.A.W. has already published its proposal to become the Council against War and Fascism, and to affiliate with the World Movement against War and Fascism. The fight against Fascist repression is, as we pointed out in our last "Proletariat," forced upon any C.A.W. that functions effectively.

The C.A.W. has taken two other important steps—the publication of "Students Against War," a fortnightly news-sheet, and the drafting of a policy, acceptance of which gives full membership rights and responsibilities to students. The constitution of the C.A.W. was framed to provide also for associate members, those students who do not accept the policy in full, but who wish to co-operate on certain issues. This important organisational development will enable the C.A.W. to carry its work forward with even greater speed this year.

## Centenary Celebrations.

We have been taught to believe that a University is a place where there is a keen examination of facts, a ruthless evaluation of these facts, and the creation of higher values on this basis.

Yet the part played by the University in the Centenary celebrations confirms the view that the decay of a ruling class is reflected not only in individuals, but in all institutions upheld by that class. Of all University organisations, only the Labour Club and the University C.A.W. made a keen examination of the facts of the Centenary, and ruthlessly evaluated these facts. To the falsehoods about "One hundred years of progress," the Labour Club contrasted the truth "Five years of crisis" and "Seventeen years of progress"—but in the Soviet Union. To the glamour of the Duke and the gaudy streets it contrasted the grim fight of the tramwaymen for the means of life. To the Centenary humbug about the glory of the Empire and the spirit of service and sacrifice, the C.A.W. replied by a lecture and a pamphlet, "The Centenary Prepares War." Both societies answered this organised drive to fascism and war by sending delegates to the Australian Congress against War and Fascism that was held to combat the Centenary propaganda.

But the University as an institution was—again without consulting the students—put at the service of the Centenary organisers. Thus Sir John Cadman, who organised the petroleum supplies

of the Allies during the last war, and who, as can be proved, came to Australia for the same purpose during the Centenary celebrations—had a degree conferred upon him by our University. On the day when the Duke received a degree, the fact that the name of the University was being officially used to add to the prestige of the Centenary warmongers, while the huge majority of the students had no hand or part in the ceremony, was clearly revealed by the personnel of the audience that filled Wilson Hall during the ceremony. The majority of the people were not students, but visitors from outside the University, who had come by special invitation. The Melbourne University Rifles, alone among special student organisations, achieved recognition, pictures of the Duke inspecting it swelling the already huge number of military and naval pictures that filled the daily press during the Centenary.

Perhaps the most glaring instance of the degradation of the University to capitalists ends during the Centenary was revealed in the publication of "We Dooks the Dook," a magazine sold on the streets of Melbourne as a University production. Actually not a word of this magazine was written by a University student, not a word of it was edited by a University student. Ironically, it passed the censorship of University authorities—that same Finance Committee that banned two articles from "M.U.M." It was produced by "Centenary Publications Incorporated," and the University Union was paid a certain sum (£200 or a percentage of the proceeds), for giving permission to advertise it as a University production, "the University having sales value." Again, the executive of the S.R.C., who with the secretary of the Union, was responsible for this business transaction, did not call a meeting of the S.R.C. to consult the members. Again, an action that can only serve to disgrace the University was carried out by University officialdom without the knowledge or consent of the students.

The University Labour Club, in the name of the students, protests most vehemently against this. It demands that all items of business be put before the full meeting of the S.R.C., and urges all students to attend these meetings in order that they may know what is being done.

## The Radical Club.

In the student notes in our last issue we pointed out that the Radical Club, if it continues to exist, must become more and more clearly fascist. The committee of the Radical Club replied to this by a letter to "Farrago." The accusation, the committee said, would not have been made if Labour Club members had attended Radical Club meetings; moreover, "the presence of one fascist in an organisation does not make it Fascist, any more than the presence of a Labour Club in the University makes the University Communist."

To this we reply: We have at no time said that the Radical Club is at present a consciously fascist organisation. We do say, however, that any really radical club, any club that attacks the root

causes of present social evils, must be anti-fascist, as fascism is the terrorist means of prolonging and intensifying these social evils. There is no place in a really radical club for even a minority of one who espouses fascist ideas.

Our real case against the Radical Club, however, is not based on the fact that one avowed fascist is a prominent member. Our case is based primarily on the nature of the discussions held at the meetings we are accused of not attending.

Take the main meeting held by the Radical Club since our last student notes. The speaker discussed "Can Democracy Survive in Britain?" His method was to state what he considered to be the main pre-requisites for fascism, and then to assert that since these did not exist in Britain, therefore Britain was not menaced by fascism. These pre-requisites were:—

- (1) Economic and political disorganisation.
- (2) National aspirations stifled by the Versailles settlement, and consequent humiliation.
- (3) A dissatisfied capitalism opposed to weak labour organisation.

Now certainly economic and political disorganisation and a "dissatisfied" capitalism do not exist to as great an extent in England at present as they did, say, in Germany at the beginning of 1933. The speaker, however, made no attempt to explain why this is so, or (the vital point), to give any reason why it should remain so. He considered the present situation as static. He merely proved, therefore, that England is not at present as close to fascism as Germany was at the beginning of 1933 (a fact so obvious that it required no proof). He totally ignored the essential fact that all the basic disintegrating forces are at work in England to-day that were present in pre-fascist Germany, that England's slower advance on the road to fascism is due precisely to the fact that British capitalism has huge foreign fields for exploitation, that nevertheless there is nothing to guarantee its maintenance of these fields, and everything to threaten it, that even despite its immense colonial super-profits the British capitalist class is being compelled to develop fascism (Sedition Bill, Means Test, financial support and police protection for Mosley), that therefore the very title, "Can democracy survive in Britain?" is confusing, there being no clear cut between capitalist "democracy" and capitalist dictatorship, that finally he, the speaker for the Radical Club, and the Radical Club itself, for sponsoring his meeting and for not pointing out his confusions to the students, were assisting the growth of his final pre-requisite for fascism—a weak labour organisation—assisting it by denying the fascist menace (as all the social-democrats of all the fascist countries have done before its triumph), and hence lulling the workers and the students who should be their allies into a feeling of false security and consequent weak organisation.



# Communist Philosophy

## A Reply to Professor Anderson

AT the Science Congress held in Melbourne in January, Professor Anderson, of the Chair of Philosophy, Sydney University, read a paper on "Marxist Philosophy." The limited space in "Proletariat" makes it impossible to reply to each of his arguments in turn. Such a task may have to be performed elsewhere after the publication of his paper. At present, however, the aim is to point to two of his most fundamental misconceptions.

### Philosophy and Social Theory.

#### Professor Anderson's Thesis.

The lack of influence of Marxist philosophy in academic circles is due to the defective formulation of its doctrines. The main obstacle to a close study of it is the way it mingles social and philosophical questions. In order to study it, it is necessary to disentangle it from the peculiar sociological setting in which the Marxists have put it, it is necessary to show that philosophy is not social theory. Marxist philosophy has been an obstacle to Marxist sociological views, and a refutation of it will be of benefit to the sociological views.

#### Communist Reply.

It is incorrect to "mingle social and philosophical questions"; they must be "disentangled from each other"; in other words, we must carry our social theory and our philosophy in two separate compartments of the head. This is impossible. Man lives in a social world as well as in the world of nature, and any philosophy, if it is to be comprehensive enough to be worthy of the name, must be based on the social as well as on the natural sciences. Divorce philosophy from any part of its scientific foundation, and it becomes a speculative pastime, valueless to explain either the world in which we live or our manner of knowing it. For this reason it is impossible not to "mingle social and philosophical questions." Social questions are philosophical questions.

But Professor Anderson goes further than this. He not only says that Communists mingle social theory and philosophy; he says they attempt to reduce philosophy to social theory. "In order to study Marxist philosophy," he says, "it is necessary to disentangle it from the peculiar sociological setting in which the Marxists have put it; it is necessary to show that philosophy is not social theory." This is a thorough-going misrepresentation of Communist theory.

Apparently the reason for Professor Anderson's mistake is the fact that Communists recognise that all philosophies are the products of the minds of men, and that these men and their minds are themselves the products of the society in which

they live, that therefore all changes in the social relations that exist between men, changes that come about as a result of the development of the machinery of production, find their reflection in the philosophy of the period and of the social class. In this sense, therefore, philosophy, like everything else that is made by man, is a social product.

But this does not imply the reduction of philosophy to social theory. Philosophy is concerned with understanding the world in which men live and their manner of knowing it. At the very basis of Communist philosophy is an acknowledgment of the fact that the material world exists independently of the minds of men. Certainly this material world is being increasingly controlled by men, and when it is so controlled and used it forms the basis of human society, but whether it is controlled or not, it is in no way dependent for its existence on the minds of men: this is the starting-point of Communist philosophy. The Communists recognise that this independent material world which philosophy tries to understand is the ultimate factor determining what the contents of philosophy shall be; but they also recognise that the degree of men's philosophical insight into the nature of the material world is dependent on the social epoch and class to which they belong. Thus a social epoch that has fine instruments at its disposal for scientific perception of the material world is a social epoch which will produce a richer, more comprehensive philosophical picture of the world than will be produced by a social epoch which has only a few crude instruments of perception at its command. Similarly a social class which has become a fetter to social development is a class that has lost all incentive to get as comprehensive a picture as possible of the material world in which it lives; such doomed social classes invariably turn away from material reality and relapse into some form of idealism and mysticism. Lenin has expressed very concisely the relationship between thought and the object of thought: "The general outlines of a picture are historically conditioned, but it is unconditionally true that this picture represents an objectively existing model." It is only in this sense, therefore, that Communists speak of philosophy as a social product. They in no way deny that the contents of philosophy are ultimately determined by "an objectively existing model," the material world. And this is precisely the point which Professor Anderson overlooks when he says Communists attempt to reduce philosophy to social theory.

Professor Anderson's pretence that philosophy and social theory can be separated gives countenance to his opening remarks that "the lack of influence of Marxist philosophy in academic circles is due to the defective formulation of its doctrines." Certainly, if Communist philosophy could be considered out of its class context, that is, if

it could be considered in academic circles which had no class interests to maintain, and if it could be considered by them not as the world-theory of the revolutionary proletariat, but simply as a world-theory (it didn't matter whose), then the persistent silence with which it is treated by our universities, broken only by very rare "refutations," such as Professor Anderson's, would be inexplicable without the manufacture of some such excuse as the "defective formulation of its doctrines." The thinness of this excuse is apparent when we consider that scarcely one professor of philosophy in the capitalist world has examined these doctrines to find out whether or not they are defectively formulated; the thinness of the excuse points also to the truth that professors of philosophy are not people removed from the struggle of the classes, but that practically without exception, consciously or unconsciously, they reflect in their philosophies the impotence of the capitalist class in the face of its crisis, its refusal to face the harsh facts of reality, its hatred and fear at the stern advance of the revolutionary proletariat.

## Eternal and Relative Truths.

### Professor Anderson's Thesis.

"Knowledge is therefore entirely relative, since it is limited to a given people and a given epoch, and their nature under transitory social and political forms, when it examines relations and forms conclusions." This quotation from Engels' "Anti-Dühring" expresses the Marxist conception of the relativity of truth. Now though the Marxists make truth relative "to a given people and a given epoch," whereas Protagoras (500 B.C.) claimed that truth was relative "to each individual," the theories are in essence the same, and the classical reputation given to Protagoras by Plato applies equally to the Marxist theory.

### Communist Refutation of Protagoras' Theory.

It has already been shown that when a Communist says knowledge is relative to a given people and a given epoch, he does not mean that all the content of men's minds is determined by the class and the epoch to which they belong; he means that the degree of men's knowledge is dependent on the epoch and class to which they belong. More will be said of the Communist theory of relative truths later; but at present it is necessary to show whether or not this theory is "in essence the same," as the theory of Protagoras refuted by Plato over 2000 years ago.

What is Protagoras' position? Confronted with the problem, What is truth? he gives the reply: Each man is the measure of truth for himself. With his sensory organs he perceives the world in which he lives; similarly all other men perceive the worlds in which they live. There is

nothing, however, to indicate that their perceptions of their worlds have anything in common; there is no means of testing whether or not one is truer than another; each lives in his own private world which is true for him.

The Communists, far from accepting this view, give it a double refutation:—

(1) In attempting to understand what truth is, we are concerned with real men, with men biologically and socially produced, and not with abstract phantoms. Actual, living, historical men are men who are born into a society furnished with the tools, the buildings, the arts, the language, the ideas, etc., that have been developed through countless preceding generations. At his birth each individual man has these aids to his understanding bequeathed to him from the past, together with his sensory organs. Throughout his life, the conceptions of the society in which he lives are transmitted into his mind; they are in the very pores of his skin as he looks out on the world. In brief, men are products and parts of a social organisation and it is as such that they perceive the world. Protagoras converts these actual, living, social men into a philosopher's phantom, into "epistemological Robinson Crusoes," each isolated in his own individual world of sensation. As these abstractions do not exist, imagining them can in no way help to solve the very real problem of how real men get a knowledge of the world.

(2) Protagoras' theory contains a fallacy that is inherent in the philosophies of all people who are cut off from the economic productive process of their time. These philosophies represent man's relations with the world in which he lives as being a mere matter of passive contemplation: with his sensory organs he perceives this world; through his sensory organs this world is presented to his mind which quietly contemplates the material presented.

But men have only to live to prove the incorrectness of this. They do not stand by and passively contemplate the world. Like other animals, their primary business is to survive as a species, and they can do this only by functioning actively; that is, by appropriating certain objects in the outside world and using them for their own ends—food, drink, shelter, etc. Primarily they are practical animals. Their knowledge of the world subserves their practical ends.

When Protagoras says each man lives in his own private world, and there is no way of testing whether one man's perceptions are truer than another's, the Communist replies that a man finds out by practice whether or not his senses have informed him correctly as to the qualities of an object, and by practice also he increases his knowledge of the qualities of an object. To the sceptical notion of Protagoras, therefore, that there is no means of testing whether one man's perceptions are truer than another's, the Communist gives the reply: Practice is the criterion of knowledge. The degree of practical control that any people at any epoch have over the material world testifies to the degree of their understanding of it.

This is the Communist refutation of the theory of relative truth as taught by Protagoras; it is, in fact, the Communist refutation of all idealism. It

is also the Communist refutation of Professor Anderson's attempt to identify the Communist theory of relative truth with that of Protagoras. In essentials they are diametrically opposed. The Communist theory of relative truth denies that men's sensations act as a screen between them and the material world in which they live; on the contrary, this revolutionary philosophy of the working-class, a philosophy in which theory and practice are combined in the gigantic task of understanding the world in order to change it, shows how any screens of illusion built up by men between themselves and the objective world, any false estimates of situations, can be broken through, dispersed, and corrected by action.

## Communist Theory of Relative Truths.

A good deal of Professor Anderson's confusion on this point is due to his failure to recognise that there are four major questions bound up in this one problem:—

(1) Does a Communist recognise that there is anything outside his mind that exercises compulsion on his thought? This question has already been answered. The Communist's recognition of an objective reality that exercises compulsion on men's thoughts is the main feature distinguishing the Communist theory of relative truths from theories such as Protagoras', which deny objective reality.

(2) Can the mind of man give a complete reflection of objective reality? Can any epoch or any class or any individual comprehend the full richness of the material world? The Communist answer to this question is quite direct—No, the complexity of the material world prohibits of full understanding of it. "The world is richer, livelier, more varied than it seems, for with each scientific step taken in advance, new parts of it are discovered." A man's thought-world, therefore, is only a relatively true reflection of the material world. The extent of his knowledge is entirely relative, being limited to a given people and a given epoch.

(3) Are any of the observations made by men absolutely and eternally true? The answer here is also direct—Yes, these are fewer than would appear at first sight, but all the same there are innumerable instances of them.

The fundamental eternal truth that forms the basis of all knowledge is that uncreatable, indestructible matter moves eternally in space and time. Matter is spoken of as uncreatable and indestructible, because however it changes its form—whether it exists as electricity, gas, liquid, solid, ether, or as any other form—it nevertheless maintains its objective material existence.

But apart from this basic eternal truth there are others. A man has a right to regard any of his observations as eternally and absolutely true, provided he has a complete scientific assurance they will never be able to be corrected in the future. Instances are—that Napoleon died on May 5, 1821, that two and two equals four, that birds have beaks, that Imperialism is the last stage of Capitalism, etc., etc.

The development of the sciences has shown that these eternal and absolute truths are fewer than

would appear at first sight. New discoveries are constantly compelling scientists to revise or even to discard what were once considered to be eternal truths. Moreover, the eternal truths of science are seen to be surrounded by a widening circle of hypotheses. For instance, the "eternal truth" that men can see molecules and atoms may not be "eternally true" if the theory of light waves is incorrect. For this reason scientists are learning to avoid such dogmatic expressions as truth and error. They recognise that scientific laws apply only within certain limits, and that even within these limits later discoveries may compel a revision. Nevertheless, because the laws stand the test of practice so far as it can be applied at present, the scientist recognises them as **relatively true**. In Engels' words, when it is found that the object answers the purpose it is intended for, then that is positive proof that the perception of it and of its qualities, so far, agrees with reality.

(4) How can any of the observations made by men be only relatively true? Surely the mere statement of an observation presents an issue of fact that is either absolutely true or absolutely false? This is the logician's point of view. When men express their observations in proportions, the logicians say, either the proposition is absolutely true or it is absolutely false. Take, for example, Boyle's law: "If the temperature remains the same, the volume of gas varies inversely to the pressure to which it is subjected." According to the logician, Boyle is here making an assertion about all gases. But a later discovery has proved his law not to apply to certain gases in certain circumstances. Therefore, according to the logician, the law is false. It is replaced by another law: "If the temperature remains the same, the volume of all gases with certain specified exceptions, varies inversely to the pressure." And, in its turn, the logicians say, this proposition is either absolutely true or absolutely false.

But it is at this point that the limitation of the logical outlook becomes apparent. The physicist replies: You say the new formulation of the law must be absolutely true or absolutely false—but how do you know which it is? It was easy for you to be wise after the event; that is, after science had shown there were exceptions to Boyle's law it was easy for you to say that the law is "absolutely false." But how are you placed now? As far as the scientist can see at present, the new formulation of the law is correct. Are you entitled, therefore, to say it is absolutely true? But to-morrow the scientist may see that further limitations have to be imposed upon it. Will your absolute truth then have to be converted into absolute falsehood? If you persist and say that it is either absolutely true or absolutely false, but that you will have to suspend judgment and wait for science to present you with more facts before you decide which it is—are you not then admitting that your logical category of "absolute truth and absolute falsehood" is a secondary matter, entirely dependent on the scientist's relative truths and his development of them? Are you not admitting that the results of the scientist, results which he is only able to achieve by ridding his mind of such dog-

matic categories as absolute truth and error, are the tests you must apply to your propositions to determine whether they are absolutely true or absolutely false? And supposing many generations pass without science altering the present formulation of the law, and you thereby begin to regard this formulation as absolutely true, what will happen when a succeeding generation does modify it, or recast it, or even discard it? Your ossified eternally true proposition must then be adjudged false. But the fact that you have taught men to regard it as eternally true will act as an obstacle in their minds, making it difficult for them to pass easily to the fuller, truer conception newly presented to them by science. Therefore, don't you see that Engels was right when he described your characterisations of "Absolutely true and absolutely false" as "childish performances"?—For the danger of thinking in terms of eternal and absolute truths is that the mind finds it very difficult to discard them, to revise them, to use them merely as stepping-stones to higher, more complete truths.

The sphere in which they are most dangerous is the moral sphere. Here more than anywhere else truths that are relative to historical periods and classes are lifted from their social context and elevated to the dignity of being absolute and eternal. These so-called eternal truths—for instance, force is evil—numb men's understanding, prevent them from examining the situation with which they are faced, and so act as a brake on their fulfilment of historical necessity.

Each time a step is taken from a limited conception of the physical and social world to a less limited though still only relatively true conception, a mile-stone is passed in the history of human society. Man comprehends absolute truth only relatively, and his historical progress is marked by the degree of his comprehension. For this reason the relativity of truth is given emphasis by Communists.

This, in barest outline, is an exposition of the Communist conception of relative truths so far as is needed to answer the main points raised by Professor Anderson. The Communist conception is entirely different from the theory of Protagoras. If Professor Anderson had not been so concerned with the defence of absolute truth, he would not have made the mistake of thinking that merely because Protagoras and Engels use the same words. "Knowledge and truth are relative," therefore the content of these words is identical.

If he had not been so intent on disentangling philosophy from social theory he would have seen in the social origin of these two philosophies the root of their utter dissimilarity.

What is the social origin of the philosophy of Protagoras? Protagoras was the product of Athenian society in the fifth century, B.C. He was faced with the complete breakdown of early science—"the scientific schools only agree in one thing, namely, that all other schools are wrong"—and he accordingly became a Sophist, basing his thoughts on a complete reaction against science. How this affected his philosophy has been shown; the material world, the object studied by natural science, was disregarded by him; men had sen-

sations, but according to him there was nothing to prove that these sensations reflected a material world, nothing to prove even that they were not utterly dissimilar from individual to individual.

This is the effect on his philosophy of the social epoch in which he lived. The effect of his social class is no less clear. "What the Sophists taught," says the bourgeois philosopher Burnet, "was the art of succeeding in a democratic state when you do not yourself belong to the ruling democracy, and, in particular, the art of getting off when you are attacked in the courts of law. That . . . part of the Sophists' work . . . is the natural outcome of the political conditions of Athens at the time." Thus the social class whose interests the Sophists served did not want from them objective truth, but rather the art of skilled argument, the art of "putting it across." Once again we see the social necessity for Protagoras' denial of objective truth.

And what is the social origin of Communist philosophy? Marx, Engels, and Lenin, the first men to express this philosophy, were the products of capitalist Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. They were faced with a science that raced from triumph to triumph, compelling men every day to admit the limitations of their old, pre-conceived ideas; evolution, the cell and the transformation of energy, were three momentous discoveries specially commented on by Engels. This robust condition of science is reflected in Communist materialism and in the Communist theory of the relativity of truth which expresses, above all, the necessity for discarding more limited conceptions of objective reality for less limited conceptions.

What of the society in which the founders of Communist philosophy lived and worked? Science creating machines with colossal productive power and showing the possibility of this productive power being constantly increased; these machines creating the material basis for abundance for all, leisure and culture for all. And in effect? These machines and their products being accumulated into fewer and fewer hands, crises of over-production, science growing afraid of its own power, appalling attacks on the conditions of the workers, worse crises; and the workers faced with the necessity of organising and struggling, developing and strengthening for the inevitable seizure of power.

Communist philosophy springs from a society that holds gigantic mechanical powers in its hands for the study and the transformation of the world; it springs from a social class which cannot use and develop these powers without first fighting for their possession. Some part of the effect of this on Communist philosophy has been shown, particularly its effect on the Communist theory of knowledge.

According to this theory, knowledge is the product of theory and practice combined. Theory without practice is baseless, useless speculation, and practice without theory is random, ineffective movement. The combination of the two has been the lever of progress, for practice tests, clarifies, sharpens and develops theory, and theory in its turn illuminates and directs practice. It is through the constant dialectical interaction of



theory and practice that the working-class is transforming itself, making itself able to lift the struggle against capitalism to constantly greater

heights, and is in the course of this historic struggle making itself fit for political rule.  
—JOYCE MANTON.

## “Back to Civilisation”

*We're back to civilisation—a house, a church, and a pub.—(Woodcraft Song.)*

THE calm, silver waters of the Baltic once again. At last there will be time to put one's thoughts in order, to put harmony and meaning into the flood of impressions and emotions which, in a few days' travel in the Soviet Union, have swept us completely off our feet. It is not many days since we stepped aboard the Soviet boat in London, sure of ourselves and our own impartiality, unsure of the Soviet Union. Now it is ourselves we are unsure of. We came to judge the U.S.S.R.—but somehow it seems that the tables have been turned. We are beginning to realise that the U.S.S.R. has judged us.

Calm at last, and time for quiet thought. But it was not to be. Down in the saloon, up on deck, on the hatches or back in the crew's Red Corner—everywhere a storm of argument raged; new impressions and new emotions swelled the already turbulent flood, rendering still more complex the tangle of thought. And yet, at the same time, this conflict of viewpoints enabled one to judge the importance of viewpoint, to distinguish between personal reaction and material achievement, between the objective and the subjective in the impressions of the others, and hence, to some extent, in one's own impressions.

“Oh, you narrow-minded Russians!” shrieks the woman sexologist at two young British Communists, who are so pleased at being mistaken for Russians that they hardly feel offended at the accusation of narrow-mindedness. “You accuse us, the bourgeoisie as you call us, of being narrow-minded, but it is you who are narrow-minded. Everything bourgeois you hate, you despise. You seem to have no other aim but destruction of everything bourgeois. If only you could be constructive, we middle class intellectuals that you despise so much would be with you; but no, you talk of nothing but hate.”

“If only you could be constructive.” A strange complaint after three or four solid weeks of gigantic new workers' homes, gigantic new factories, gigantic new theatres, new schools, new roads, new ways of life, a new humanity—. But not so strange when one considers this woman's whole social background. One can glimpse, as acquaintance becomes closer, the struggle that must have been hers to escape the traditional religious atmosphere of the Victorian home, and win the progressive-liberal outlook of the middle-class scientist. And no sooner is the “progressive” outlook won than it has ceased to be progressive, and the struggle against conserva-

tism, so far from being ended, becomes harder than ever. To win one's way to the “progressive” viewpoint, and then to be called conservative (or labelled “bourgeois” as though one were a breed of dog, and the wrong breed at that) is enough to make anyone angry. And then to visit the Soviet Union, and to ask question after question about Soviet sexology, and to wait for the Soviet sexologists in their turn to enquire about British sexology, and to find that they have no questions to put, well—it is not difficult, from such a personal experience and with such a personal background, to arrive at the generalisation that all Russians and all Communists are narrow-minded.

What is interesting is that the sexologist has come so near to Communism, for she is in the main very friendly to the land of the Soviets. She disposes of our friend the liberal in masterly style. “What I contend,” the liberal is always declaring, “is that despite all that has been achieved in Russia—and, mind you, I myself am the first to admit that much has been accomplished in many ways—that still all this has been built on the achievements of Capitalism, and that however much this may have been necessary in Russia, and I am willing to admit that it may have been necessary, in England Capitalism is giving the workers an ever-increasing standard of comfort, and has yet to be proved a failure.”

“What do you know of working-class conditions in England?” asks the sexologist. “Have you ever lived among the workers for a week? Have you ever missed a meal? Have you ever been really hungry in your life?”

The liberal looks pained. “You may not believe it,” he states, “but I once lived for three weeks in a little cottage, doing all the work myself.” And then he adds, “Except for a man who used to come in and do the heavy work.”

It is amusing to see that in the main the discussion resolves itself into a “class war” between the First Class and Tourist Class passengers, the former being composed largely of social-democrats, the latter of Communists. The professor is the most formidable of the social-democrats, and the most elusive. The Communists challenge him to a discussion on Soviet democracy, which is duly held one evening. The professor, in opening the discussion, admits that in the significance of the ordinary working man in life, in his ability to participate in the control of his life and the administration of justice, Soviet

democracy is far in advance of capitalist democracy. But—and the professor elaborates his butts at great length, suggesting that in the treatment of political offenders, and in the refusal to countenance opposition political parties, the U.S.S.R. must, and this is the professor's gravely considered opinion, be compared with Fascist Germany at its worst.

After the professor comes the deluge. One speaker after another gives instances of the class bias of capitalist democracy, of its hypocrisy and relentless cruelty, not only in Fascist countries, but in the United States, in India, in Britain itself. There is not a shred left of capitalist democracy at the end of an hour. The professor is asked to sum up. What will he say? Will he still suggest that, despite the many advantages of Soviet democracy, it must nevertheless be treated by every respectable Britisher as a deadly poison?

"I would like to point out that you have all been speaking on the wrong subject. Our subject is Soviet democracy. You have been talking of Capitalist democracy. I admit all that you say about it; in fact, I have written several books attacking Capitalist democracy much more severely than any of you have done. What I had hoped we might do was to compare Soviet democracy with Socialist democracy, as it might be constitutionally achieved in such a country as Britain." And before we had recovered our breath he went on to answer awkward questions so cleverly that we hardly realised he was answering them by the time-honoured method of dodging them.

Nor did we quite realise at the time that his whole method had been that of avoiding the concrete comparison—of refusing to compare Soviet Russia either with Tsarist Russia or the present-day capitalist world, and comparing it instead with a Utopia that has no existence save in the imagination. If we are to compare the Soviet Union with Paradise, whether it be present-day Britain and Australia, minus the starving unemployed, minus the under-nourished school-children, minus hunger marches, strikes, slums, the rapid tendency to Fascism and war, and a score of other realities, or a future British Empire achieved by the peaceful and constitutional method of converting people to Socialism or Douglas Credit or Christianity, then admittedly we must find fault with the Soviet Union.

Perhaps the most interesting evening is when the dancer talks to us and dances for us. Years ago a little American boy had become possessed of the ambition to be a "premier danseur" of the American ballet. This ambition was fulfilled while he was quite a young man. But having achieved his wish, he found himself still dissatisfied. He realised that he was not expressing his own personality through the ballet, but only the traditions of another age. So, having reached the pinnacle, he stepped off it, to open a theatre of his own where he experimented with new forms of dancing. His productions did not have a mass appeal—he represented Heaven in one production, with two Christs on the Cross, one white and one black. "New York didn't like that." He had been through many phases, but recently, after a

period of religious dancing, had reacted violently, and felt the need to seek something new to express. He had come to Russia and found it. Now he was going back to express what he had seen through the dance—and to study the theory and practice of Communism. As a scientist like Professor Levy has come to Marxism through his science, here was a dancer who had come to Marxism through his dancing. "I think I will be of value to the revolutionary movement," he said simply.

The bespectacled little American didn't say much. It wasn't till near the end of our voyage that I learnt that he had gone out into Ural Mountains, hewed a space in the virgin forest, erected one of the largest steel-rolling mills in the world, and set it working efficiently. He had trained raw peasants to be skilled technicians, had seen them set out for other parts in search of better pay or conditions, or the adventures of travel, and had gone on to train another lot of raw peasants. His wife is unfeignedly glad to be getting back to home. She misses the church, and she has daughters growing up. The little man doesn't say what his emotions are, but it is not difficult to guess where his heart lies.

The green fields of Germany, and the calm passage through the Kiel Canal. Two little flax-haired boys in the uniform of the Hitler Jugend run down to the bank, salute stiffly, shout, "Heil Hitler!" and hurl stones at the red banner, with the hammer, sickle, and Soviet star. The stones fall short, and the ship sails calmly on.

"I've always been religious because I was brought up that way," says the English girl who has been teaching in Moscow, "but over there it just slipped into the background—I forgot all about it. I didn't need it; there was so much else." She tells of "awful" adventures—not so very "awful" except to a girl coming, as she evidently does, from a sheltered middle class home—of difficulty in finding rooms, of a landlady who stole her money, of losing a bread-ticket, of moving to a new room by pushing her belongings through the streets on a wheelbarrow, and yet she is full of enthusiasm for the land of the Soviets, and keen to return. "The details were awful," she says, "but the spirit is great."

Slowly we steam up the Thames, into the dirty mist of London, past factories, church spires, and slums. Tower Bridge opens its arms for us, and a policeman stares stolidly as we pass through. It is still low tide, and only inch by inch can the "Jan Ruzutak" draw into Hay's Wharf.

"Glad to be back in London?" I ask the liberal.

"By jove, yes," he replies, "Sober old London. It'll be good to be able to walk about without seeing those continual slogans everywhere."

But, as usual, our friend the liberal is wrong. Evening has drawn on, and to the left a flaming Neon sign has written against the dark background of the London sky the name of a popular brand of ale. To the right, past London Bridge, an opposition sign shrieks forth in burning letters the name of an equally popular brand of beer. Sober old London has her slogans out to greet us.

# SOME CENSORED AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

## "M.U.M." and "UPSURGE."

EVERY day it becomes increasingly clear that bourgeois society is menaced by any too exact, too profound penetration of contemporary life. Apart from those writers who, though born into the bourgeoisie, have allied themselves with the proletariat and depict mainly working-class life, the greatest bourgeois writers of to-day—such as Marcel Proust in France, T. S. Eliot in England, William Faulkner in America—show, in so far as their work reproduces faithfully the section of reality that constitutes their experience, to those who have eyes to see, the imminence of the destruction of bourgeois society, since they present in their writings an unparalleled picture of social decay.

It becomes increasingly necessary for the bourgeoisie, therefore, to repress writing which faithfully reproduces any section of contemporary life. In Germany, where there was a great literary flourishing in the post-war years, and where the class-struggle is very advanced, the bourgeoisie has found it necessary to suppress not only writers with a proletarian viewpoint, but those among its own ranks who depict the present bourgeois world with power and sincerity. Feuchtwanger is perhaps the most notable of these.

Similar developments can be seen in other countries. In Australia recent events have shown that the measure of intellectual freedom previously allowed here is no longer compatible with the safety of the ruling class. Apart from the attempted exclusion from this country of the Czechoslovakian writer, Egon Enwin Kisch, and apart from the increased number of English publications which are prohibited entry by the censor, various attacks have been made on local literary productions, notably the banning of J. M. Harcourt's novel, "Upsurge," which deals with West Australian life, and the attempted suppression of last year's "Melbourne University Magazine." I intend, therefore, to examine briefly the content of these two works, and discover what trends they represent in the literature of to-day.

The reasons given for the banning of the "Melbourne University Magazine" were that it was "Marxist," and that its contents were "not interesting to the general body of the students." It is worthy of note in this connection that the editor's reply to the latter charge, at a students' protest meeting against the banning of the "Melbourne University Magazine" was that:

"No work of literary value could be interesting to the general body of the students."

This statement throws a light on the position of the editor and of the principal contributors of "M.U.M." It more or less summarises their ideas of the rôle—the fate—of literature at the present day.

The writer of the central article, "A Short Note on Poetry at Present," accepts implicitly the limi-

tations of present capitalist society, a society in which:

"The complete break-up of a cultural tradition, limited by class, but diffused, has made desperate the possibilities of general communication"

so that literature is necessarily created by the few for the few. The writer examines the lack of unity in contemporary society:

"The religious synthesis has gone, and no new synthesis has been raised up, so the fundamental fact for the individual has become his own consciousness."

Poetry, then, cannot be concerned with any generally accepted objective reality, but only with the transcription of successive, disjointed impressions, passively received on the poet's mind. According to the author of the article:

"To find expression adequate for the speed and disjointedness of thought is a painful business and one not likely to be sympathetically received by the occasional reader. It is probable that until society as a whole accepts some general belief which at present can follow only social change, that poetry will continue to occupy only the few interested in the search. . . ."

It does not seem to occur to the writer that in an acceptance of social change as the central fact of contemporary life, in an acceptance of the philosophy of dialectical materialism which comprehends this change, the poet can find a new synthesis to replace the old—in fact, the only adequate synthesis of contemporary reality.

An attempt at Marxist criticism was probably intended in the review of Professor Chisholm's book, "Towards Hérodias." The reviewer points out the professor's more obvious errors and concludes by explaining how an acceptance of dialectical materialism would provide a solution to the various intellectual knots in which Professor Chisholm ties himself. In many places, however, the reviewer misses the point. He gives no adequate explanation of the "tragic dilemma" which Professor Chisholm discovers in the works of the poets he is examining and to which the professor gives his own particular interpretation. He fails to point out that though the professor's interpretation is unacceptable, yet the tragic dilemma which he discovers did, and must, inevitably have presented itself to many of the poets mentioned, in the society of nineteenth century France: the dilemma being that of the intense individualist who, while hating the society in which he lives, is unable to see or to ally himself with the forces which would overthrow that society, and who, at the same time, cannot escape into the ideal world which he seeks to create, since the poet who feels intensely cannot withdraw from the external world or separate himself from humanity.

For this problem—the romantic problem—there can be no solution as long as bourgeois society exists. It is echoed to-day by the Eliot school, if such a term may be used, since T. S. Eliot finds his imitators in poets of widely divergent views. To this school belongs much of the poetry con-

tributed to "M.U.M.," as well as that of Bertram Higgins, Elgar Holt, and Clive Turnbull, whose works are selected for review in the section entitled "Recent Australian Literature." Holt and Turnbull represent the worst in romantic poetry. One doubts whether their work is a reaction to life or merely a reaction to the poetry of Eliot and others. They make no attempt to interpret their own environment, but borrow the "intricacies of suburban imagery" from Eliot, together with his intellectual futilism. Higgins' poem, "Mordecaius Overture," is of a different order, but represents the same retreat from external reality. The reviewer fails, however, to point out this similarity and its causes.

It is not impossible for works of genius to make their appearance even at this epoch of bourgeois culture. For instance, Marcel Proust's "Remembrance of Things Past" stands out as the epic of futility and decay. But when a writer has expressed these things with the greatest perfection,

("I have measured out my life with coffee-spoons.")

and with the greatest intensity his reaction against them, he has summed up the experience of life which bourgeois society affords, and there remains for him and his ilk nothing but to say it again or to be silent.

The author of the article before quoted, "A Short Note on Poetry at Present," says:—

"The most comprehensive medium available to art is the word—at its most intense poetry, whether arranged in lines or not—and on this, more and more, responsibility will devolve in the task of achieving order and discrimination, in our relation to things within and without us. . . ."

But it is not surprising to find in "M.U.M." the poem, "Li Pu Turns to Silence," expressing disgust with the powerlessness of the word:

"Since the word unheeded fails,  
Frothed with a quick tedium . . .  
(You've gotta use words to talk to them)  
I go with the weighted knees  
Of an imagined postman through an english snow  
To a circumscribed and silent medium. . . ."

The word loses its force in a society where writers are split up into small groups, each with its own standards, its own intellectual background, and often its own language, incomprehensible to the uninitiated. In face of his narrowing audience, the poet mournfully demands, Is it worth while? like Eliot or the French poet, Paul Valéry, of whom one critic said that—

"He can hardly bring himself to write, he can hardly even bring himself to explain why he cannot bring himself to write."

Such a situation is the inevitable result of that separation of art from life at which the bourgeois aesthetes aim, and of which William Morris foretold:

"Its foredoomed end must be that art at last will seem too delicate a thing for even the hands of the initiated to touch, and the initiated must at last sit still and do nothing—to the grief of no one."

It must be remembered, of course, that the literary tendency to which the principal contributors to the last "M.U.M." adhere is only one, though perhaps the most characteristic, among many that

can be distinguished in the writings of to-day. Most leading Australian writers to-day have working-class sympathies, and reflect in their work phases of working-class life. J. M. Harcourt's recent novel, "Upsurge," to which I referred at the beginning of this article, is nevertheless the first attempt in this country to give a complete picture of social conditions from the standpoint of a class-conscious writer.

This novel deals with the breakdown of bourgeois morality, and the beginnings of a revolutionary movement in Western Australia. It is not surprising that the book is in many respects unsatisfactory. After all, it is written from the standpoint, not of a class-conscious worker, but of a class-conscious member of the petty-bourgeoisie who has not much first-hand knowledge of the revolutionary movement. The author is often forced, therefore, to rely for his matter not on his experience of life, but on his theoretical knowledge and his inventive powers. His invention and interweaving of incident is very ingenious, but often too ingenious to be convincing. His characterisation, too, is often weak. For example, the chief revolutionary in the book, Steve Riley, though he does not actually wear a beard or carry a bomb in his pocket, is nevertheless not very far removed from the vulgar conception of the "bearded Bolshevik." It is post-war bourgeois society, or a section of it, that the writer knows well; so it is members of this society, idle, empty-headed, and, on the whole, spineless, that he takes as his norm. The Communist, as a variation from that norm, appears rather fantastic.

There are, however, some good scenes in the book, such as the strike at the relief-camp, near the end. The author of "Upsurge" has recognised the class-struggle as the central fact in present-day life. When he knows a good deal more about the struggle, and particularly about the working-class, he may produce some quite good revolutionary writing.

The novel "Upsurge" and the poetry in "M.U.M." represent two very different types of reaction to present social and literary conditions. The author of "Upsurge" was undoubtedly influenced to some extent by the desire to cater for the depraved tastes of his bourgeois audience, and the prevalent demand for "hot stuff." Most of the poems in "M.U.M.," on the other hand (with the notable exception of one entitled "Stormy Weather," in which the word is still used as a keen and effective weapon), represent that literature which resigns itself to addressing an ever-narrowing audience.

This tendency in present bourgeois writers is remarked upon by Soviet critics. Thus Selivanovsky, in an article on "The Poetry of Socialism" in "Literature of the Peoples of the U.S.S.R." says:

"To me it seems more than a matter of mere chance that many gifted poets of Western Europe are feeling very strongly the uselessness of writing poetry. People are reading poetry less and less. . . . Why is this so? . . . The main reason is to be found in the absence of unity in modern bourgeois life."

"It is this unity of consciousness, this unity of the perception of reality, which is peculiar to modern Soviet poetry. Poetry here is not isolated from life: it is one of its component parts and is its organic continuation."

It is argued in "M.U.M." that such a unity of consciousness is only possible in a stable society, where there is some generally admitted reality. I have suggested, however, that the processes of social change in themselves offer a unifying,

central theme to the writer of to-day—a theme which enables literature to penetrate deeper into reality, instead of seeking to escape from it. To explore the possibilities of this theme, though, the writer must obtain that unimpeded view of reality which the working-class standpoint alone affords.

—A. Y. PALMER.

## HOW TO FIGHT THE BOOK BAN

THE agitation which has been aroused over the ban of books in Australia is at present being directed in such a way that there is little likelihood of its being effective. This is so despite the fact that the Book Censorship Abolition League is doing some good work — which the Labour Club is enthusiastically assisting. But the general trend of the League's work can lead only to ineffective confusion if it continues as it has done up to the present. The position can be remedied by the issues involved being clearly seen and the movement set on a realistic basis.

The unrealistic attitude that is being displayed by many of those opposed to the ban has been nowhere more apparent than in the debate which took place on February 26, the subject being, "That political censorship be abolished." The press report sums up the debate brilliantly: "... the audience showed keen appreciation of the new type of educational entertainment which the 'Star' introduced to Melbourne."

It would have seemed grossly out of place in such an atmosphere to have exposed the brutal facts that form the basis of the ban on books. To those who have not perfected the art of rationalising prejudices, the issue is a simple one. The present state of the world is such that capitalism can provide the majority of the population with only the lowest level of subsistence, threatened with continually increasing impoverishment, with no security or hope of the future. Men usually begin to think when their stomachs are empty, and there are signs all over the world that the masses of wage-earners and sections of the "middle class" and intellectuals are beginning to believe that they have nothing to lose but their chains. In such circumstances the rulers of the country must take extreme action to prevent the rise of the masses. One of the first steps is to stop the interchange of ideas amongst the workers, and it is this that we see in the present ban on radical literature. The desperate state of capitalism is seen in the fact that a book such as Hutt's "Conditions of the Working Class in Great Britain," which consists of statistics and medical reports, may not be read. The action against literature is accompanied by a general offensive against the working class, the prevention of demonstrations, the introduction of the

Sedition Bill, the amendment to the Crimes Acts, militarisation of the police force, etc.

In the face of these facts the case put forward by the affirmative in the debate appears utterly futile. The speakers considered that censorship should "depend on the judgment of a court of law" (Mr. Ball) since the English common law gives adequate protection against blasphemy, obscenity, and sedition (Mr. Stretton), and "we have the Police Offences Act and the Crimes Act, both of which are adequate to deal with any emergency that might present itself" (Mr. Gorman). The Prime Minister recently said that the present censorship is part of the policy of the government (i.e., of the powers controlling the government). This is a clear indication that the book ban is not due to the stupidity of Mr. White or of some illiterate office employee of the Customs Department, as was suggested by one or two speakers. If, then, the books are banned at the wish of the government, the placing of the censorship of books into the hands of a court of law would make no difference, since, if necessary, new Acts could be introduced to ban all radical literature.

The lack of realism present in the debate is exemplified by the statement of Mr. Stretton, that if a man were persecuted in his own country he had only to seek the shores of England where he would be patted on the back, smiled at, placed down in Hyde Park, and told, "Little man you're going to have a busy day." To anyone with the slightest knowledge of working class matters in present-day England this untruth is appalling.

We can see that the debate served no purpose other than obscuring the actual issues. Students must realise that the censorship of books is only one part of the general offensive conducted against the working class. It cannot be considered as an isolated event—and if agitation against it is to be effective it must not obscure the class issue involved; it must see that the fight against censorship is part of the general fight against fascism, and that, though the co-operation of those people who will join the fight against reaction on this issue and not on others must certainly be sought, yet it must not be won by excluding the decisive anti-fascist force — the working class.

—W.N.C.

# THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

**T**HE Disarmament Conference has proved a dismal failure. Millions of trusting and war-weary people had watched with anxious eyes the setting up of a League of Nations, which was to make war a horrible spectre of the past, and open up a rosy future of peace.

At the outset, this League of Nations had as its ostensible aim and its main justification the convening of a conference to make the abolition of war a reality; and for twelve long years the people of the world waited the fulfilment of the promise the statesmen of Geneva had given them. Five years were spent in preparation for this conference, the doom of which was sealed before it began.

To-day, after fifteen years of "disarmament" and peace conferences, we are again face to face with world war. Every observer of note, every leading militarist, every diplomat, admits it is drawing closer. The signs are for all to read: An economic crisis of unprecedented duration and acuteness, and which shows no sign of alleviation; a bitter struggle for diminishing markets — a struggle which last year brought Europe to the brink of war in the case of Austria, and which has engendered an ill-concealed savage antagonism between every single capitalist country—antagonisms which threaten to take on the form of war any day.

We see and hear the sabre-rattling and extreme barbarism and degeneracy in all spheres in the openly Fascist countries. We see, in spite of occasional and extremely weak denials on the part of the press, a steady swelling of the ranks of the millions of unemployed. We hear daily the politician's cry of "defence," followed by budgetary allocations of still more millions of pounds for destruction, and naturally the concomitant—more ten per cent. wage-cuts.

World upheaval stares us in the face.

How are we to explain this?

The diplomats in the League of Nations inform us that there can be no peace, no disarmament, till the people change their attitude and become more genuine in their strivings for peace, more brotherly and trusting.

Is this really so?

The World War was brought to a hurried end because of the widespread mutinies in the armies and navies, and the growing wave of discontent everywhere, amounting to revolution in Russia, Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Finland, etc. The people were tired of war.

To-day the people of every country in the world want peace, and are protesting at the extravagant expenditure in armaments in the face of increasing poverty and starvation. It is obvious that the people want peace, you and I want peace, yet in mockery of the Paris Pact renouncing war and which almost all European and non-European countries signed, the armaments race goes on at an even more accelerated pace, and scientific laboratories give still more murderous instruments and gases to the gods of destruction.

It would need a lengthy article to explain with necessary clarity why it is that the capitalist

economic system is driving, and from its very nature must drive, the world into war unless the necessary preventive measures are taken by the workers and those who ally themselves with them.

## WHY THE LEAGUE WAS FORMED.

The history of the League of Nations has been short and eventful. The thermometer and mirror of the world situation, it has, from the day of its formation to the present day, afforded a glaring exposure of Capitalism to those who have cared to view events in perspective.

The League of Nations was set up at the end of the war primarily to preserve the interests of the victor powers, France and Britain. A careful examination of the composition and constitution of the League, which was based on acceptance of Versailles, shows it to have been dominated by France and Britain from the outset. To give legal justification to their rights to the spoils of war, these two powers framed a clause in the League Covenant which bound the signatories to respect each other's territorial integrity. The League was formed as an instrument for perpetuating the dominance of the victor powers.

To the war-weary people of the world, it was represented as an instrument of peace. The workers were rising in strikes, mutinies, and revolutions. They had had enough of war and expressed it in fight against the war-makers. This dangerous anti-war activity had to be stopped; it was therefore side-tracked into the League of Nations. The League became the prison-house of the anti-war sentiments of the world's workers.

Its first acts, however, revealed to the full its hypocritical nature. Despite the obvious necessity of securing the co-operation of all countries if it were to be successful in preventing war, Germany, till 1926, and the rest of the Central Powers and the Soviet Union were excluded. Moreover, during the very days of its formation, the powers which were the mainstay of the League were sending invading armies into the Soviet Union. At this period, fourteen armies invaded Soviet territory, most of them belonging to members of the League. These powers supported Kolchak and Denikin in their shocking massacre of men, women, and children. Certainly not an auspicious beginning for an international organ of peace!

In November, 1921, Dr. Nansen, the Norwegian representative, made an appeal to the League for concrete relief to be sent to famine-stricken, plague-ridden Russia. The Assembly of the League did not lift a finger. Whereupon Dr. Nansen showed plainly that he saw that the League was playing at internationalism, but was really under the leadership of powers striving for the overthrow of the Soviet Government.

## MANDATES.

Supporters of the League are apt to admit its shortcomings, but point with pride to its achievements. What are they?

According to a publication of the League of Nations Union:—

"It controls the mandate system, which rules some of the backward parts of the world, 'in the interests of the native population,' through some of the greatest colonial experts in the world."

Very many examples could be given to show what mandatory control means. I will cite a typical instance:

In 1920, the League assigned the mandate of Mesopotamia to Great Britain, in accordance with a secret Franco-British treaty which agreed that Great Britain should have a monopoly of Mesopotamian oil, but allow France 25 per cent. of the product for the privilege of having pipe lines across her territory. This, despite the claims of U.S.A. for oil concessions negotiated with Turkey between 1898 and 1910.

As for the mandatory rule being "in the interests of the native population," the Arabs of Mesopotamia have continually fought against British rule, and Britain is compelled to retain in that district an army of many thousands, with a powerful air force, to maintain order.

Of course, in the interests of the Arabs!

It is also significant that, though it was announced at the outset that the mandates were put in the care of the Great Powers in order that the inhabitants would be educated and cared for, in the case of Armenia where the population was living in famine conditions, and where the administration promised more responsibility than economic advantage, no mandatory power was forthcoming.

### INTERNATIONAL DISPUTES.

What of the international disputes settled by the League? There have been some. As early as 1921, when Finland and Sweden were at loggerheads over the Aaland Islands, the League awarded these to Finland, Sweden accepting the decision "under protest." Ostensibly, also, the peaceful transfer of the Saar to Germany, and the settlement of the Jugo-Slavian dispute last year were the work of the League. But war was narrowly averted several times, and minor disputes settled, before 1914, when there was no League in existence. And where it has not served the interests of the dominant groupings in the League to interfere in international disputes, it has not done so; e.g., its inaction at the Japanese invasion of Manchuria.

The League laid it down that the chief weapon to be used against any Power violating the Covenant, i.e., going to war before submitting the dispute to arbitration, was to be economic boycott. From the beginning, however, the general opinion was that boycott was Utopian. What capitalist countries would be prepared to lose valuable trade with another country, or to antagonise a political ally in the interests of abstract justice, especially if the ally were a strong State, and the other an almost insignificant one? Just how Utopian this idea was, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria clearly demonstrated.

What of the League of Nations now? Germany and Japan, the world's two most belligerent countries, have left it, the Soviet Union has joined it.

Has this made the League into an instrument of peace?

We can answer this question only by analysing the circumstances surrounding the withdrawal of Germany and Japan and the entry of the Soviet Union.

### JAPAN WITHDRAWS.

In 1931, Japan, a prominent and peace-loving member of the League, invaded Manchuria and China, killing thousands, devastating villages, and ruthlessly slaughtering the Chinese civilian population at Chapei. Enquiries were hurled at the League—why did it not take action to stop the Japanese aggression? The League suavely replied that war had not been declared, and that, as it had not been officially apprised of the events taking place in Manchuria, it was powerless to act.

It was only when, after terrible bloodshed and devastation, Japan began to encroach on British and American possessions, that the League hastily reprimanded her; whereupon Japan withdrew her delegates from Geneva in order that she might continue, unhampered, to carry out her mission of ridding Manchuria of "bandits." Despite Japan's withdrawal, however, the dominant League States, Britain and France, have continued to aid her in her aggression in China wherever their own interests are not threatened. Japan's withdrawal from the League, therefore, does not indicate that the League is inherently an organisation for peace; it merely indicates the dominance of British-French interests.

### GERMANY WITHDRAWS.

Germany, which entered the League in 1926 after capitalist rehabilitation, and which occupied a position well under the thumb of the dominant powers, left it in 1933. Hitler made the Versailles system, on which the League is based, one of the scapegoats for Germany's desperate economic plight. Within the League Germany demanded official recognition of her right to arm, but France, and at that time England, having no illusions about Germany's aim to reconquer lost territories which were in their hands, opposed Germany's claim. Whereupon Germany left the League, and is arming rapidly (now with open, if somewhat qualified, British support). Once again, it was not peace as such, but the Versailles "status quo" that Britain and France were protecting.

### THE SOVIET JOINS THE LEAGUE.

At present, however, because inter-imperialist war does not serve the interests of the dominant League powers (which have in their hands the fruits of Versailles), the League has to some extent become a force retarding the outbreak of inter-imperialist war.

For that reason the Soviet Union, in September, 1934, accepted the League's invitation to become a member State.

This action brought torrents of abuse from Trotskyists and other enemies of the Soviet Union. The U.S.S.R. had become Capitalist! Confused liberals shared this delusion and felt comforted.

What is the truth?

There is nothing inconsistent in the Soviet's action. Long ago, Lenin pointed out it was infantile to criticise the Soviet Union for collaborating on certain points with capitalist powers, in the interests of the Proletarian Revolution. In June, 1934, Maisky, the Soviet ambassador in London, stated: "The Soviet will decide regarding her entry or non-entry into the League, solely and exclusively according to the measure in which the League can play a real part in reinforcing peace. . . . The Soviet wants peace—prolonged, permanent, and unlimited peace."

But why, if the League is the organ of selfish capitalist ends, did it admit the Soviet?

Last April, France sent to England a note of protest, stating that Germany was continuing every form of rearmament, "within limits of which it claims to be the sole judge, in contempt of the provisions of the Treaty." France also declared that Germany had "made negotiations impossible," and called for a return to the basis of the League. As Britain remained unmoved, France, alarmed at the prospect of German aggression, began to negotiate with the Soviet Union and press for its entry into the League. In order to maintain friendly relations with France, England was in the end forced to invite the Soviet to join the League.

The Soviet Union is now in a strategic position to expose the League (as it did during the Dis-

armament Conference), and in some measure to curb it. If it is attacked by non-League members—Germany or Japan—it will be difficult for League members such as England to support these aggressive powers without completely exposing themselves and the League.

But Soviet diplomacy alone cannot prevent war.\* It has staved it off and continues to stave it off. Its aim, however, is to expose the League to the people of the world, for it is with them—that the decision rests to end war.

In the short space of time we have before war becomes a reality, it is the duty of all students, all intellectuals, in collaboration with all these forces desiring peace, the strongest of which is necessarily the working class, constantly and convincingly to tear aside the tissues of lies which capitalist politicians weave about war preparations, one of which is that we can safely leave the fight for peace to the League of Nations.

As capitalist diplomats will not (cannot) give the world peace, then the people who want peace, the people who have to fight the wars, are in organised manner, taking the organisation against war into their own hands. Our place is with them.

—H.T.

\*Lack of space prevents an account of the Soviet's peace policy and its basis. An outline of this is given in "Proletariat," June, 1933, and reasons indicated why the Soviet Government is the only anti-war government in the world.

## WRITERS' LEAGUE

### Australian Section of Writers' International.

THE co-operation of writers in the campaign around the freeing of Kisch has been followed by the formation of an Australian section of the Writers' International (the Writers' League), with branches in Sydney and Melbourne.

The statement of principles which the Provisional Committee has suggested for adoption declares that membership of the League is open to writers:—

(a) Who see in the development of Fascism the terrorist dictatorship of dying capitalism and a menace to all the best achievements in human culture, and consider that the best in the civilisation of the past can only be preserved and further developed by joining in the struggle of the working class for a new socialist society; and who are opposed to all attempts to hinder unity in the struggle or any retreat before Fascism or compromise with fascist tendencies.

(b) Who, if members of the working class, desire to express in their work, more effectively than before, the struggle of their class.

(c) Who will use their pens and their influence against imperialist war, and in defence of the Soviet Union, the State where the foundations of Socialism have already been laid, and will expose the hidden forms of war

being carried on against colonial and other oppressed peoples, particularly those whose exploitation is directed by the Australian Government.

The Writers' League intends to hold a national conference in two months' time. In the meantime, the Melbourne branch is arranging, as has already been done in Sydney, to hold lectures and study circles on literary matters; to gain contact with working class and other "left" writers; to encourage contributions to working class papers, and ultimately to collaborate with Sydney in publishing its own journal.

In order to encourage new writers, the League is holding a short story competition. The conditions are as follow:—

A prize of £2/2/- is being offered for a short story of less than 4000 words, by a writer who has not had more than three articles, sketches, or short stories published and paid for. Stories should be signed by a pen name; the author's real name and address to be sent with manuscript in a sealed envelope. Stories entered for this competition should reach

The Secretary, Writers' League,

169 Exhibition Street,

not later than Friday, April 26th.



# "WHAT MARX REALLY MEANT"

## BANNED FROM M.U.M.

LATE last year, the "Melbourne University Magazine" was severely censored because it contained Marxist articles. Two of these the editor was forbidden to print, one on the appalling condition of medical services in Melbourne, and another reviewing Mr. G. D. H. Cole's book, "What Marx Really Meant." The professorial censor described the latter article as "in bad taste and wrong anyhow," while the former was simply "in bad taste as it criticised the hospitals which were connected with the University."

Now, Mr. Cole's book is recommended at our University as a reference book on Marxism. The teachings of Marx himself are not popular among our lecturers. (Indeed, the lecturer on economics has been known to preface his lecture on Marxian economics by the remark, "I am now going to explain to you the fallacies of the economic theory of Karl Marx.") On the other hand, books such as Cole's "What Marx Really Meant," which would have been better named, "What Cole Would Like Marx to Have Really Meant," are very acceptable to them. This is to be expected from economists who receive doctorates of letters for writing theses such as "How Australia Weathered the Crisis," while the crisis referred to is still deepening.

The review of "What Marx Really Meant" was therefore banned. According to the professor responsible, it was "wrong anyhow" because Mr. G. D. H. Cole, far from being the distorter of Marxism he was painted by the reviewer, was "the most feared Communist in Great Britain." Now, Mr. Cole is not a Communist, or even a remote approach to one. Mr. Cole's Marx is as harmless to the capitalist class as are our professors—in actual fact quite as useful as they. The contents of the review should make this clear; they should also make it clear that the review was banned, not because it was "in bad taste," but because an effort was being made to stifle revolutionary student criticism.

The following is substantially the banned review.

When a writer sets out to write a book which he declares is not intended to be an addition to the huge pile of expositions and criticisms of the works of Marx, but simply a book which will reproduce the essence of these works "brought up to date," he is attempting no mean task. Especially is this so when the conclusions of Marx, in their virgin purity, are the theoretical foundation of a living advancing movement embracing hundreds of millions.

But Mr. G. D. H. Cole, author of "The Great Southern Mystery" and other thrillers, in his latest work, "What Marx Really Meant," declares this feat to be his intention. Instead, he has written a book no less imaginative than his detective stories and as devoid as they of the essence of Marxism.

But, because in it Mr. Cole is really serious, this book is more important than his thrillers have ever been.

The sheer weight of historical development has so clearly borne out Marx's theories and predictions that many "left" and liberal writers nowadays recognise that Marx really "had something to say." Unlike the conservative reactionaries who ignore Marx, these enlightened gentlemen patronise Marxism, take from it phrases and isolated ideas, and serve these up in a context which is dictated by the aspirations and limitations of their particular class. Thus Mr. Cole quotes great numbers of Marxian phrases and borrows the Marxian conceptions only to distort them beyond recognition, and to deprive them of all their revolutionary content.

To anyone who has read Marx and has tested Marxism against the irrefutable facts of history, it is very surprising to find Cole, who claims to be erudite, saying, in effect, "Had Marx lived in the third decade of the twentieth century instead of away back in the dim nineteenth, he would have written that Capitalism in its development has so changed social relationships that enlarged masses of the petty-bourgeoisie (the mechanics, technicians, business experts, etc.), aided by the diminished ranks of the proletariat, could convert it into Socialism by a combined process of enlightenment and legislation, without recourse to the detestable tactic of violent overthrow of the capitalist state. In fact, such violence is no longer feasible in this era of fading class antagonisms, but rather the possibilities of constitutionally ushering in Socialism have greatly increased."

This, in brief, is Cole's main thesis. He proceeds to annihilate the "parrot-like, hero-worshipping, self-styled Marxists" of the Third International, who obstinately maintain that Marx's teachings, further developed by Lenin, are still correct. He annihilates them in every aspect of Marxian theory. They do not see that "What Marx REALLY Meant" was that they should abandon dialectical materialism for idealism, give up the labour theory of value for one which admits the need for capitalists, refute the general crisis of capitalism by ignoring it, and finally abandon all revolutionary ideology for the theory of the development of Capitalism through the ballot-box to Socialism. That one hundred and sixty million people led by these obstinate parrots are now successfully building Socialism in the U.S.S.R., that one hundred million Chinese now govern themselves under the banner of their Soviets, that Capitalism is in the throes of world crisis, and is everywhere scrapping the sham of "democracy" and moving to Fascism and war, that the world's workers are fighting heroically against barbaric attacks on their conditions—these are incidental trifles that do not upset Mr. Cole at all. For

him, Fascism is a far-off possibility which may, indeed, bring benefits to the working class! For him the threatening war is not necessarily the outcome of Imperialist rivalry:

“ . . . if two countries go to war, it is not necessary to prove that their conflict is the outcome of a rivalry inherent in Capitalism. It may be; but it may be due to some entirely different cause.” What cause, Mr. Cole?

For Mr. Cole the technical expert, the highly skilled worker, and the efficient accountant form the main social group. Not once does he mention the terrible degradation of the millions of colonial peoples from whose exploitation the bourgeoisie of England and other “home” countries obtained the super-profits with which to bribe these skilled workers, experts, and technicians with comparatively good conditions, so that they became a privileged section of the working class, content to press only for the concessions which were easily granted, subservient therefore to Capitalism, thinking in terms of improving their social standing, against revolutionary action from the less fortunate masses of the workers, whose conditions had improved very little, if at all, and acquiescing in the plunder of the colonies. With the growth of Britain as the world exchange, huge armies of business experts, clerks, etc., swelled the ranks of this privileged class whose political aspirations were expressed, first in the Liberal Party, and later, as the period of British supremacy came to an end and the workers became more militant, in the Labour Party, which was a more subtle means of getting the workers, in this period of rapidly developing open class antagonisms, to support capitalist “democracy.” The history of the Labour Governments and of the leaders of the Labour Party is abundant proof of this characterisation.

Now the masses of British workers, labour aristocracy, and petty-bourgeoisie, are being subjected to grave worsening of conditions. British capitalism is rushing to war. The state is being fascised (Sedition Bill, etc.), and the much-boasted British complacency is vanished. Lenin, expanding Marx’s teachings in the period of imperialism (Marx died in 1883), pointed to these developments very clearly. For Mr. Cole, however, they are a sealed book.

The writer of “What Marx Really Meant” does not understand the international character of Marxism. For him, the slogan “Labour in a white skin cannot be free while labour in a black skin is enslaved” does not exist. He is not concerned with “solutions” for the workers of Germany, Japan, America, China, or India. He probably thinks the heroic German workers are stupid to risk their lives painting over Nazi slogans in red with “Save Thaelmann.” He is concerned with finding a “solution” for British capitalists and petty-bourgeoisie and (incidentally) for the British working-class.

Britons, he says, can solve the difficulty “of over-production and under-consumption” by educating the masses into voting a truly socialist party into power. All that will then be necessary will be the abolition of that stumbling-block, the House of Lords. This can be done constitution-

ally. The army, navy, air force, police, and Fascists will be kept standing by, until finally they, together with their capitalist masters who are to be compensated, will learn the truth, and be converted to Socialism.

To this foolish dream we can only reply, it is already drowned in the clamour of war-mongering and the clash of fascist arms on the one hand, and the resounding protests of the working-class against these on the other.

The method by which Mr. Cole discovers “What Marx Really Meant” is instructive. We will consider one example among many. According to him, Marx, in 1848, regarded the petty-bourgeoisie as a dying class. But had Marx completed the Third Volume of “Capital” himself, instead of leaving it to Engels to edit, he would have written of the petty-bourgeoisie as a growing class destined to play the leading rôle in social development (Engels, apparently, was the villain who first distorted Marx!).

We would point out, on the contrary, that while Marx never spoke of the petty-bourgeoisie as a dying class, he was the first person to point out its real nature as a class destined to play no leading rôle in the development of socialism, a class always aspiring to elevate itself to the bourgeoisie, but always being pressed further and further down towards the proletariat. Cole does not understand that, though numerically strengthened during the development of capitalism (on the basis of colonial exploitation), in the era of monopoly capitalism, in general crisis, the impoverishment of the petty-bourgeoisie is proceeding apace. The political influence of the petty-bourgeoisie and its ideologists has declined, while the greater organisation of the workers is giving them greater political power. Cole does not agree that the petty-bourgeoisie is being impoverished. Thousands of unemployed university graduates, thousands of small shopkeepers, clerks, and technical experts could enlighten him. He does not even believe there has been a general worsening of conditions — but talks of “pockets of misery,” groups of unemployed and poorly paid workers in scattered instances. He gives these theses a certain plausibility to the unobservant reader only because he uses no concrete instances to illustrate them. Statistical data are foreign and fatal to his method.

Mr. Cole’s pretentious book is nothing more than the effort of a petty-bourgeois to “solve” social problems according to his own desires. It is a fitting production of a class which vacillates between the capitalists on the one hand and the workers on the other, having no real understanding of what it wants. The connection of his book with Marxism is limited to its misuse of Marxian phrases and its cheap distortion of Marxian concepts in order to give authority to a hopelessly confused analysis of present-day problems, and in order also to discredit Marxism, which provides a clear understanding of these problems, and is the revolutionary weapon in the struggle for their solution.

It is no wonder such a distortion of Marx finds favour in Capitalist Universities.

—A. FINGER.



# BOOK REVIEWS

## FASCISM AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION, by R. Palme Dutt, 1934.

THE banning of this monumental work is a tribute paid by the representatives of our Australian democracy to the authoritative position which R. Palme Dutt has established in the sphere of revolutionary literature. The book constitutes a complete manual for those who seek to probe to its roots the past, present, and future of capitalist civilisation. References to Russia are few. There is no portrayal of the society in which the writer's philosophy is being carried to boundless fruition in every field of human activity, no justifiably proud contrast between the Capitalist and Communist worlds, no blowing of trumpets in praise of the U.S.S.R.—only a clear, dispassionate, logical analysis of the objective and subjective forces which are driving capitalist society to destruction, the whole lit up and inspired by revolutionary enthusiasm born of that certainty and supreme confidence which only a knowledge of historical materialism can give.

The book is planned as a complete examination of world conditions by the method of historical materialism. That is, the basic dynamic forces produced by the development of economy and technique are analysed; then the reflection and consequences of those forces in the moral, social, and political superstructure.

A detailed statistical survey is made of the astounding progress achieved in the methods of production, the strangling of productive power owing to its having outrun the limits of profitable sale, the growth of permanent mass unemployment; in short, the whole fundamental contradiction between social production and private appropriation which has rendered class society obsolete and is to-day issuing in the general crisis and stagnation of decaying capitalism. In this survey the illusory basis of the partial, post-war stabilisation is discussed, and how, with the end of stabilisation, history has shown the bankruptcy of the "Ford versus Marx" arguments.

Having described the reverses in the technical and economic situation, a treatment of the changes in ideology and in commercial practice consequential upon this shifting economic basis becomes necessary. The progressive agencies which expanding capitalism had invoked must now be checked—hence the revolt against science and the machine; the discrediting of parliamentary democracy, the breakdown of international trade, and the establishment of the principle of autarchy, the feverish but futile attempts at "Planned Capitalism," the final attempted solution—war.

Faced with overwhelming contradictions, and the menace of proletarian revolution, the bourgeoisie makes its last desperate throw in Fascism, which is not a new political or economic system, but which grows organically out of capitalism and pursues the same ends, but necessarily by violence, coercion and dictatorship. Gathering a mass basis in the disinherited middle class and intermediate strata, subsidised, supported, and armed by the ruling class and its reflections in the

police, military, and judicature, protected by Social Democratic governments, the movement, stripped of its demagogic embroidery, robbed of its all-embracing opportunist promises, is revealed as a method, a new tactic of terrorist dictatorship in a period of imperialist decay, aiming at open class rule, the imposition of "iron-fist harmony," the destruction of all workers' organisations, and the smashing of the revolutionary vanguard.

An historical survey of the now Fascist countries—Italy, Germany, and Austria—reveals with striking clarity the squandered possibilities of building socialism in the immediate post-war period. A strong revolutionary leadership to guide the working-class was lacking, and the completely futile and impotent bourgeoisie was saved by the treacherous Social Democratic leadership, which, by negotiation and persuasion, saved the ruling class when armed repression had failed it, and which repaid the mistaken obedience and loyalty of the workers with further fetters, binding them to class society.

The vain pretentiousness of Fascist theory, the illusion of the Corporate State, the whole empty efflatum of Fascist propaganda, is shattered by a mass of facts marshalled with logical ruthlessness. Fascism, in fact, means the barbarisation of men and women, and their ultimate destruction in war.

Considerable stress is laid upon the relation between Social Democracy and Fascism. Just as the bourgeoisie is willing to enter into collaboration with the corrupt and opportunist representatives of the working-class while these "leaders" are able to hold and restrain the masses, so the ruling class casts off the useless sycophants when their mass support is lost. The ease and speed with which this is done demonstrates clearly the reasons for the existence, function, and dissolution of Social Democracy in capitalist society. The completely unemotional and detached manner in which big business views the Official Labour Party is expressed with exemplary clarity in a number of remarkably revealing extracts from the Deutsche Führerbriefe or private politico-economic correspondence issued for confidential circulation to the leaders of finance-capital.

In the immediate post-war period, extremely revolutionary conditions set Social Democratic governments in power, and under their protecting rule Fascist and pre-Fascist forms, both ideological and practical, were prepared. On the one side, Social Democracy cunningly distorts Marxism and robs it of its revolutionary essence, it abandons international socialism and practises class collaboration in place of the relentless prosecution of the class struggle, all "in the name of democracy"; on the other, it stultifies, divides, paralyses, and actively suppresses the revolutionary energy of the workers; it declares war on the Communist vanguard, permits the existence of private armies and openly counter-revolutionary organisations, and shows its complete subservience to its capitalist paymasters by carrying

through repressive economic and political legislation. Although constantly exposed by present developments, the Social Democratic leadership persistently refuses the United Front except when forced by mass pressure from below (France), and unmistakably shows by its policy of the "lesser evil," and by its history (Germany, Austria, Italy), that it prefers political extinction to unity and active leadership of the working-class. "Social Democracy and Fascism offer, in effect, rival services to the bourgeoisie for the slaying of Communism."

The three imperialist but still nominally democratic countries—England, France, and the United States — are subjected to examination and the bases of Fascist movements, both specific and within parliament are exposed. There is also discussed the significance of the various National and New Deal governments.

But Fascism, far from exemplifying the strength of the ruling class, proves from its onset, objectively, the increasing restriction of productive power by capitalist social relations, and, subjectively, the necessity of destroying the rising

revolutionary tide by new forms of coercion.

Finally, under the battle-cry of "Fascism is not inevitable!" the writer calls the non-revolutionary section of the working-class away from its somnolence and quiet repose, away from its trust in paper ballots and deceptive bourgeois democracy, towards an active united front, towards the recognition and acceptance of the triumphant leadership of the Communist International, towards the establishment of Soviet Power.

The style of the book is eminently suited to the material and purpose; indeed, revolutionary enthusiasm and conviction could produce no other. The language is incisive and vivid, yet restrained by regard for scientific accuracy, while the whole work abounds in passages of sustained brilliance and philosophical insight. A review of this book is an impossibility; each word is so necessary, each line so packed with essential meaning. The sternest and widest agitation must be conducted in order to restore this masterpiece to its rightful owners—the working-class of the world.

—"PHILOSOPHIKOS."

## "SOVIET RUSSIA FIGHTS NEUROSIS," by F. Williams, M.D., 1934.

THIS book represents the efforts of an American psychiatrist to think out on paper the problems impressed on him by two visits to the Soviet Union. Ignorant of Marxism, oblivious of the class-struggle, thinking of psychiatry in terms of clinics and institutions in which neurotics are patched up, Dr. Williams is at first profoundly shocked and stirred by the Soviet's treatment of psychiatry, and then made deeply thoughtful.

As "Soviet Russia Fights Neurosis" is, practically speaking, a diary in which Dr. Williams tries to work out the significance of what he has seen, his ideas become clarified and his understanding deeper as the book progresses. Before visiting the Soviet, he evidently made no effort to strike to the fundamental roots of neurosis; he saw the tormenting social relationships of the capitalist world, but not their economic basis. This accounts for the many and extreme weaknesses in the book, but it also accounts for it having a peculiar value — particularly for students and other members of the petty-bourgeoisie—in that Dr. Williams approaches the "social experiment" in the Soviet Union with all the manifold prejudices that are the common property of petty-bourgeois intellectuals, and in the course of the book steadily discards them. For the Marxist who is looking for a scientifically sound social analysis of the causes of neurosis, the book will not be satisfying; it nevertheless affords very interesting insight into the mind of a professional man who is developing the germs of class-consciousness. As the work of a psychiatry expert, the book serves as a valuable witness to the success of the Soviet's fight against neurosis.

The supreme lesson that the Soviet has to teach in psychiatry, Dr. Williams says, is that there mental hygiene is treated in a positive instead of a negative sense; it is treated in terms of one hundred per cent. of the population, instead of as in the capitalist world being concerned

with the rehabilitation of the ten to fifteen per cent. of the population that has got into difficulty.

But though the doctor recognises this, it is only at great pains and after many pages that he arrives at the wavering and scarcely formulated conclusion that the Soviet Union is able to fight neurosis "by keeping well people well," because it has different social relationships based on a different economic system. He goes off on many false tracks before he recognises this. Indeed, in one passage he refers to the economic system as the product of the philosophic system; what is needed, he says, is a new philosophy of life—change men's hearts, and the change in social relationships will follow. This idealistic approach is common among petty-bourgeois intellectuals, and Dr. Williams never quite rids himself of it. In one or two passages he recognises that civil war is the only force that can usher in the new society, but he shows no understanding of the rôle of the various class forces, of the two decisive classes—finance-capital and proletariat—and of the various indecisive interlying strata. The civil war that will usher in the new society is not for him essentially a class war. He seems to regard it as the result of the apparently self-originating enlightenment of the whole people, in particular youth, against exploitation in the abstract.

He advances, however, from his belief that the transition from Capitalism to Communism will come about by pure reason alone. "It is not the 'radical' who first applies force," he says. "The radical attempts to reason. Eventually his reason is met by force, then reasoning stops—consider present-day Germany, Austria, Fascist Italy, old Russia." Here Dr. Williams presents a simple statement of fact.

Dr. Williams' comparison of what the Capitalist crisis on the one hand and Socialism on the other mean "in terms of human beings" is drastic