

RECENT LITERATURE ON COMMUNISM

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- E. H. Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia*. I: *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923*; II: *The Economic Order*; III: *Soviet Russia and the World*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1951-1953, 430 pp., 400 pp., 614 pp. \$6.00 each.
- Barrington Moore, Jr., *Terror and Progress—USSR*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1954, 261 pp., \$4.50.
- Hugh Seton-Watson, *From Lenin to Malenkov*, New York, Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1953, 356 pp. \$6.00.
- Rudolf Schlesinger, *Central European Democracy and Its Background*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1953, 402 pp. 30s.

FOR the policy-maker as well as the layman there is a great and natural curiosity about the future of a world society which includes both the Soviet Union and the United States. How, for example, are the Western and Soviet systems likely to develop, and what effects will they have on each other? More specifically, what trends in their development are currently discernible, and what role is Marxian theory playing in the process? The volumes under review, in varying ways and from differing vantage points, are all concerned with these questions, and it is of some interest to consider the character and substance of the answers that they provide.

Viewed from the present stage of historical development, the original form of Marxian theory appears as a genuine child of the liberalist period. Marx's dialectic was that of free capitalist competition, through which the basic economic processes would freely develop their inherent contradictions. The very rationality of the system would, according to Marx, lead to its destruction by the proletarian revolution. But then the liberalist period gave way to that of "organized capitalism." Growing productivity, a rising standard of living, and the concentration of economic and political power worked together to reconcile a large part of the laboring classes to the established society. When Lenin, in his struggle against "economism" and the "spontaneity theory,"

broke with the "classical" Marxian conception and organized the Party rather than the class as the active revolutionary force, he reoriented Marxian theory to the new reality of capitalism. However, in spite of this strategic reorientation, Lenin continued to envisage the revolutionary dialectic as the dialectic of the capitalist system itself. He thought that only a small part of the working class—namely, the "labor aristocracy"—had been "corrupted," while the vast majority of the proletariat was still maturing for the revolution. Viewed within the Marxian philosophy of history, the fact that the socialist revolution had triumphed only in backward Russia appeared as a historical "accident," bound to set in motion the forces which would correct this accident—that is to say, release the revolution in the advanced industrial countries, especially in Germany.

In the first three volumes of his *History of Soviet Russia*, E. H. Carr has demonstrated, with a wealth of material, how Bolshevik policy, domestic as well as foreign, was in this sense tentative and improvised—designed to expedite the "rescue" of socialism from outside Russia, from the West. It was the final defeat of the German revolution which caused the fundamental reorientation of Bolshevik policy—this time not only a strategic reorientation on the same theoretical base, but the creation of a new base. The Stalinist rather than the Leninist revolution constitutes the historical turning point: the rise of a new civilization outside and alongside the capitalist world. What Marx had seen as the internal development of capitalist society that would explode this society from within now emerged as an external power that, repelled by capitalist society, would compete with it from the outside. On the foundation of a nationalized and centralized economy, a social system was constructed which adapted and mobilized the technical and scientific rationality of industrial civilization. The latter was thus split into two and faced the future in a hostile and competing civilization. Confronted with this challenge, Western society has responded with the economic, technical, and political mobilization of its own resources—a process which now threatens to engulf the liberalistic and libertarian forces that have been the great advocates of progress.

Certain basic trends seem to be dangerously common to both competing systems: the triumph of technological rationality, of large industry over the individual; universal coordination; the spread of administration into all spheres of life; and the assimilation of private into public existence.

The new historical constellation undermines the ground for that theoretical neutrality which has been allowed to the social sciences during the last two centuries or so. In order to maintain its traditional objectivity, social theory would now have to operate in a universe of discourse comprising the Soviet order as well as its counterpart, and would have to subject both to the same critical standards, seeing both in the one world-historical continuum in which they developed. Clearly, the construction of such a universe of discourse today would be a very speculative and highly unrewarding enterprise. In the life and death struggle between two civilizations, to transcend the struggle is a precarious and dangerous matter. Objectivity is on safer ground when it abstracts from the world-historical continuum, from long-range trends and implications, and discards, for the time being, all theorizing. Thus, the social scientist can preserve objectivity while at the same time taking side with and for his civilization. He can point to the terror in the Soviet world, in contrast to the liberties in the Western world; to the low living standard there, compared with the high living standard here; to expansion there, as against containment here. He can show how Soviet society has made the individual into a complete instrument of labor, into a receptacle of decrees, into a means for other ends. To place these facts within the historical perspective and dialectic would require a super-Hegelian *hybris*—the usurpation of the power of the *Weltgeist*. It is neither of scientific nor of moral comfort to recall that terror has been the godfather of progress in the building of any civilization. No philosophy can justify the sufferings of the millions who are again being sacrificed, here and there, on the slaughterbench of World History. Still, Communism is more than and different from what Stalinism has made of it—more and different not only in theory, but in actuality. The tension between the real potentialities of Com-

munism and its present implementation determines to a great extent the contemporary history of Communism in and outside the Soviet world. Under these circumstances, there is no justification for abstracting from the social content of Communism, for ignoring the long-range historical dynamic generated by this content, or for belittling its influence on the transformation of the Western world.

Yet such abstraction is all too prevalent in the contemporary analysis of Communism. It often leads to a distortion of facts by omission—a distortion which is the more irresponsible as it minimizes the prospects which Western civilization is facing. The abstract character of this type of analysis is frequently hidden by a misplaced concreteness: the material is purified from the historical context and, in this insulated form, is subjected to the most up-to-date methods of sociological and psychological exactness. From such material, for example, an imaginary “operational code of the Politburo” can be constructed with considerable resemblance to a reality from which all substance has been removed. The conceptual framework of such analyses, if it exists at all, is usually limited to variations on the theme of “Power” (with a capital P). From Lenin to Malenkov, the development of Communism is seen as the diabolic scheme of a ruthless conspiratorial group which became the more evil the more it became totalitarian. The basic objective of the Bolsheviks has been to obtain, secure, and extend power by all available means, and Marxian theory has helped them to organize a “socialist” dictatorship as the most effective means of attaining this objective.

All this may be perfectly true, but it leads barely to the point where analysis should commence. The Bolshevik regime sustains and is sustained by the dynamic of a highly industrialized society in which all groups and functions are rigidly coordinated with the nationalized productive apparatus. This system operates side by side with the far more advanced industrial civilization of the West, and its structure, its goals, and the means to achieve them are to a great extent determined by this competitive co-existence. No matter how absolute the leaders' power is, no

matter what their personal or group interests are, this situation objectively defines their power as well as their aims. Moreover, Communism is also a social factor in the Western world which cannot be evaluated simply or even primarily in terms of the strategy and composition of the Soviet-controlled Communist parties; a good case could be made for arguing that, as a social factor, Western Communism was stronger before it came under Soviet-Russian control and is stronger where it is still largely outside Soviet-Russian control. The question as to where the Soviet Union is going and what the prospects of Communism are can be approached only through an analysis of Soviet and Western society, of the trends inherent in their economic and political structure, and of their interrelation.

In his book *Terror and Progress—USSR*, Barrington Moore, Jr., tries to answer this question by interpreting the Soviet-Russian system of power in terms of the social structure which it has created. The larger part of his book is devoted to the actual functioning of the controls in the various branches of Soviet society. Industry, agriculture, science and art, and the terror-apparatus itself are taken up, and in each of these areas the operation of the controls, the position of the controllers, and the response of the controlled are shown. The very detailed description draws upon a large contemporary material, including the interviews with refugees from the Soviet orbit conducted by the staff of the Russian Research Center at Harvard University. Utilized with great care and in the proper context, they not only provide new information but also serve as a check for conclusions derived from less direct sources. Throughout the book, emphasis is placed on the identification of weak spots: conflicting interests and policies, unmastered forces in the material and intellectual culture, flaws in the system which may constitute nuclei for centrifugal trends. Moore finds quite a few. But in the total picture they appear as the cracks and waste of a going system rather than as explosive elements. However, the system itself is not regarded as static, or the direction of its movement as fixed.

The most important insights of Moore's analysis are in the

last chapter, "Images of the Future." Here, he tries to infer from his findings the dynamic of the system, and, in doing so, he progresses into the dimension where the real prospects of Soviet society become visible. In the preceding chapters, the dictatorship itself was not subjected to the same qualitative analysis which was applied to the subjects and to the stuff of the dictatorship: the dictator or dictators remained above the clouds, on an inaccessible Olympus of their own. But in the last chapter the dictatorship itself is seen as part of the whole which it dominates. As such, it is an institution which is afflicted by the vicissitudes of the institutions within and without its dominion. Moore discerns the fundamental trends which operate as "sources of change" in the institutions of Soviet society. Three are distinguished: (1) "a continuation and possibly even some intensification of the dynamic, totalitarian, and expansionist characteristics of the Stalinist system" (p. 223); (2) the ascendancy of the "technical-rational and formal legal features that exist in the Soviet system . . . over the totalitarian ones" (*ibid.*); and (3) a reactivation of the "traditionalist elements" which would tend to revert Soviet society to some sort of semi-feudal "Oriental despotism" (p. 225). Without excluding the possibility that the first or third trend may gain momentum, under certain conditions, Moore considers a technocratic development most likely. It would involve a "rationalization" of the dictatorship; the growth of technical-bureaucratic administration over political terror; collegiate rather than personal rule; and a "larger flow of goods and services" to the mass of the population (p. 189). Moore's sober and conscientious attitude avoids the overstatements which could provide the grand historical perspective for his findings. This reviewer, who has more faith in speculation, believes that, given "normal" conditions of national and international stabilization, Soviet society might tend toward a totalitarian welfare state. As to the prospects of international stabilization, he agrees with Moore's pessimistic view: "The essence of the matter lies in the fact that the mere existence of a powerful industrial state dominating much of the Eurasian continent would be a potential threat to other nations, and primarily to the United States,

no matter how peaceful its behavior and apparent intentions" (p. 229).

It is significant that Moore's analysis, which probes into the structure of Soviet society in its national rather than international aspects, culminates in a statement defining the position of the Western world. In spite of the doctrine and practice of "socialism in one country," the interconnection between the two systems has remained a substantive one throughout. An analysis of Communist trends which does not focus on this interconnection would be inadequate in its essentials. And for the period from 1917 through 1923, E. H. Carr's *History of Soviet Russia* has set standards which can hardly be equaled. To this reviewer, Carr's work is a rare example of great contemporary historiography: it combines mastery of the factual material with that knowledge and understanding of theory which enables him to see the course of the Bolshevik revolution in the context of the political and economic transformation of contemporary civilization. Thus from his account it becomes clear to what extent the fate of Communism from Marx to Lenin reflects a historical process whose direction is by no means irreversible. Neither Stalinism nor Fascism have eradicated the roots of a different kind of Communism in industrial society. So long as these roots exist, the history of world Communism will be the social history of Communism *and* capitalism in their interdependence.

Hugh Seton-Watson's *From Lenin to Malenkou*, on the other hand, is far from presenting this history. His book is characteristic of the oversimplifications and abstractions which relate most of what happened to the evil power-drive of the Bolsheviks and their misguided followers. In the Introduction, the author states: "If I can make any claim to an original approach to the subject, it is in my emphasis on the relationship of communist movements to social classes. . . ." However, this intention has not materialized. Social classes and their relation to the Communist movement are discussed at various places, but such discussion does not go beyond vague generalities or well-known facts, and, what is more important, it does not guide the analysis and presentation of the material. The book gives an account of the development

of Communism from the beginnings of Leninism to the present, in all the major areas of the world, including the colonial regions, and all this in 356 pages. Summing up, Seton-Watson declares that the "social causes of communism are frustration of the intelligentsia and poverty of the masses" (p. 352). He immediately qualifies the second factor by pointing out, correctly, that the populations living in the most abject misery are usually not the most revolutionary ones: "revolutionary agitators" must be at hand to "exploit poverty for their ends." Thus it all comes back to the intelligentsia: "The frustration of the intelligentsia is a more immediate cause of communist and other anti-western revolutionary movements than is the poverty of the masses" (pp. 353f.). He asks: "Can anything be done to remedy this scourge of the twentieth century?" Yes, improvements in the educational system, especially, for Asian, African, and Latin-American intellectuals, that will enable them to serve their peoples' welfare and at the same time "remove the frustration that devours them" (p. 354). Seton-Watson is more specific in defining what should be the objective of Western policy: the "aim must be to liberate the peoples oppressed by totalitarian Stalinist imperialism." However, the "means by which Stalinism can be forced back, and the oppressed peoples, including the Russian people itself—the greatest martyr of the last thirty years—can be liberated, are not clear today. This does not mean that they will not become clear, or that they do not exist" (pp. 348f.).

One has only to compare Seton-Watson's chapters on the Central European revolutions and on the Comintern policy with E. H. Carr's treatment of the same subjects in the magnificent third volume of his *History of Soviet Russia* in order to see how abbreviations and simplifications change the picture of a revolutionary period in world history. Carr's volume is entitled *Soviet Russia and the World*; it deals with Bolshevik foreign policy until shortly before Lenin's death, but, in doing so, it covers the history of postwar Europe and Asia during this period. Carr shows how the "dual policy" of Soviet national interest and international revolutionary objectives originated and developed in the constant interplay between Marxian theory and practice,

between East and West, between metropolitan and colonial movements. He demonstrates how each major turn in this policy, and the rapid subordination of the international to the national aspects, was determined by a new constellation of forces inside and outside the Soviet camp, and how Soviet policy tried to cope with this constellation in terms of the inherited principles of Marxist theory and strategy. The role of Marxian theory in Soviet policy is certainly most controversial, but the fact remains that the Leninist party was a Marxist party, that the Bolshevik organization of Soviet society followed in the beginning the basic Marxian concepts, and that Marxism has been canonized as the official Soviet ideology. Once this ideology has thus been incorporated into the society, it operates as a real factor apart from the personal sincerity and intentions of the policy-makers. The dual policy depends, for the attainment of its ultimate objective, on the materialization of the Marxian prediction: the establishment of socialism in the mature capitalist world, and primarily in Germany. Carr's analysis shows to what extent "socialism in one country" was decided before Stalin—but in Germany rather than in Russia; and his chapters on the German revolution and its influence on Comintern policy contain in a footnote more material and more insight than whole monographs on the subject.

With the Weimar Republic began that social and political reorganization of the Western world which enabled it as a whole to withstand the Central European revolutions of the left and the Fascist counterrevolt, and to survive the Second World War. On the European side, German Social Democracy played a decisive role in this process. Before the First World War, the German and Austrian Social Democratic organizations were ostensibly the strongest Marxist forces and the undisputed interpreters of Marxist theory and strategy. When Lenin challenged this monopoly, he and his followers remained a small minority. And Social Democracy, without losing the support of the majority of the laboring classes, became the savior of the very system against which it was organized. Clearly, this accomplishment cannot be understood in terms of personalities and

party structure: the policy of democratic cooperation was not simply imposed upon a radical rank and file by the bureaucratic party leadership. Nor would it be sufficient to explain the course of Social Democracy as the mere reflection of capitalism's growing capacity to grant the workers a higher standard of living. In the fateful period at the end of the First World War, this was hardly the case in Central Europe.

In his book *Central European Democracy and Its Background*, Rudolf Schlesinger tries to provide an explanation by writing the history of the representative economic and political organizations of the German and Austrian working-classes from 1862 to the triumph of National Socialism. The political parties, trade unions, consumers' cooperatives, etc., are treated as "sectional organizations" typical of a mature industrial society. On this basis, Schlesinger follows the development of the conflict between economic and political interests which determined to a high degree the fate of Central European democracy. He rejects Lenin's theory of the "labor aristocracy" as inadequate to explain the collaborationist policy of Social Democracy, arguing that if "labor aristocracy" is

thought of as the group of those who are capable of gaining material improvements in consequence of their employers' prosperity, it is clear that an increase in the sum of profits distributable will tend to turn that group from a mere minority aristocracy into a majority of the whole working class. Supposing that it embraced the whole of the working class, there is no reason why in the labour movement, and also in the body politic, of such an imperialist State democracy in the full sense of any formal definition could not flourish. . . . It would be destroyed only by the revolt of the underdog nations—and by the Imperialist States' own preparations to meet this threat (p. 83).

Schlesinger traces the revisionist and collaborationist policies of Social Democracy back to the very beginnings of the party and shows the strength of the Lassallean rather than Marxian tradition in its development. A well-documented historical survey, his book points up the predominance of national and nationalistic attitudes which found amazingly outspoken expression at the party and trade union congresses during the first decade of the twentieth century. The uniformity of these atti-

tudes is somewhat overplayed, and the opposition to them treated too summarily. But the Social Democratic policy of 1914 and 1918 clearly appears as the culmination of a long process in which the working-class institutions and organizations were effectively integrated into the growing structure of "organized capitalism." No wonder then that Social Democracy sided with the established order and against the Marxian revolution as early as November 1918, when the famous alliance with the army was concluded. Thus, what happened in the period of the Weimar Republic was, according to Schlesinger, hardly more than "a moderate shift in the distribution of social power within the Junker-bourgeois coalition which controlled Germany" (p. 152).

From this point on, Schlesinger's book becomes a critical history of the decline and downfall of the German and Austrian democracies—critical from a left-socialist point of view. His partisanship neither violates nor contradicts the facts. He rejects the short cut which puts all the responsibility for the failure of the social revolution in these countries on the Social Democrats; and he is not satisfied with the explanation that the German workers just were not "revolutionary." German Communism is subjected to an equally critical analysis. In his view, the class orientation of the German workers became fluid as the Empire collapsed and a less hesitant strategy on the part of the Communists-Spartacists during the first months of the revolution would have swung the German workers to the left.

Schlesinger's study elucidates the extent to which the fate of Communism during the formative period was determined by factors outside Russia and outside Bolshevism. From Marx to Stalin, the ideology and reality of Communism were shaped by the ideology and reality of industrial civilization. There is no evidence that this essential link has been loosened. The prospects of Communism must still be evaluated in terms of the prospects of present-day industrial civilization.