

at the top. The military also are at the centre of things, as the covers of *Time* magazine frequently reveal (though "war-lords" is surely a somewhat loaded term for a sociologist to employ?). The mass-society does exhibit a dismaying intellectual squalor. The prospect of the Cold War is not exhilarating, as I, if not the first, will not be the last to admit.

But taken as a whole his thesis is not convincing. He outlines a glossy American-type 1984 and says this is it: 1956. It could become that; some of the signs point that way. But American trends, even more than those of other countries, have a habit of changing direction. There are ruling groups in America, and they exhibit certain characteristics. But there are ruling groups in every country; and it could be argued that America is maturing as a nation, instead of going rotten, when it begins to formulate a little more clearly the pattern of a ruling class. Leaving aside that question, however, one must still feel that by comparison with Europe the United States is far from possessing a "power élite." A recession, or a mitigation of the Cold War, could still quite sharply change the ruling structure of America. The intellectuals are less alienated and undervalued than Mr. Mills seems to state (or does he believe that they *should* remain alienated?). Local and regional ties are stronger, and more comforting, than he would allow. Congress is not down for the count, even if it failed to pass the Bricker Amendment. The communications media are not altogether lickspittle, as Mr. Mills's quotations from James Reston or Walter Lippmann

might have led him to note. Indeed, never have so many been downtrodden so luxuriously.

Nor, I think, is the military ascendancy as firm and integrated as Mr. Mills contends. Regular army and navy officers do resemble corporation heads in their Protestant conservatism of outlook. But if they have power at the moment, they do not yet have wealth. Many come from plain homes (Dwight Eisenhower and Omar Bradley are examples); and so far, their children marry into the services rather than the corporations. If they mingle easily with civilian leaders, part of the reason is that they have retained many civilian attributes, including civilian physiognomies (and, incidentally, they have often been mixed up with politics in the past, during and after wars: there is no sinister novelty here). Some join boards of directors, on retirement. Why not?—even honorific rewards have been scarce hitherto. Some corporation heads have become generals, but only baby ones and only under war conditions. There is no certainty (thank heaven) that the present necessity for a grandiose military establishment will continue, nor that its ways of thought have triumphed over quieter counsels. There is no universal military training in America, and no universal military ethos, either in Mr. Eisenhower's mind or (despite what Mr. Mills implies) among the churches.

I have said enough to indicate that this is a cantankerous, ingenious, earnest book, in which prediction is offered as depiction. Mr. Mills hears the sabres rattle; to me the sound is a bit like that of the trains clanking through Crewe.

Marcus Cunliffe

PRIMITIVE LENINISM

TO WHAT extent is the "Leninist revival" in the Soviet Union a true return to the Communist beliefs of forty or thirty-five years ago? There is evidently a new confidence in the pursuit of the original goal of "world revolution": the present Soviet leaders no longer share Stalin's fear of any revolutionary movement that might seize power without direct Soviet assistance, and are prepared to grant the foreign Communist parties greater tactical independence in exploring the roads to power which might appear most promising in their national conditions. But is the new Leninism really comparable to the old one—or has it only become possible because Communist parties throughout the world have been so thoroughly assimilated to the Soviet model in the intervening, "Stalinist," epoch?

Nothing could remind us more forcefully of

the gulf that separates the 1956 variety of "Leninism" from the original than the first volume of Comintern documents, just edited for Chatham House by Mrs. Jane Degras.* It covers the period from the Comintern's foundation to the fourth world congress—the last one attended by Lenin. Prepared with the scholarship and selected with the sense of historical relevance familiar to students of Mrs. Degras's edition of *Documents on Soviet Foreign Policy*, it condenses in a single volume all the decisive evidence of what the original Leninism really was like in the international field—and why it failed so thoroughly.

* *The Communist International: Documents. Volume I: 1919-1922.* Oxford University Press. 55s.

Basically, the story told by these documents is that of a tragic misunderstanding—the historical misunderstanding which led to the union of the revolutionary minorities within the Western Labour movement with Lenin's Bolshevik Party in a new International. In a Europe torn by the First World War, the Russian revolution had aroused tremendous hopes; the first act of the victorious Bolsheviks had been an appeal to all the peoples for immediate peace, and when they actually concluded an armistice with Imperial Germany at the price of severe territorial sacrifices, they kindled a new faith in the internationalist anti-war groups of socialists everywhere, many of whom had already met the Bolshevik exiles at conferences during the war. To the revolutionary Marxists and Syndicalists of Europe, the events in poor and backward Russia appeared as the fulfilment of their own dreams of a truly proletarian revolution. Were not the Soviets the origins of "dictatorship of the proletariat" as defined by Marx—the organs for the direct rule of the immense majority of working men and women over the minority of the exploiters, with perfect democracy within the ranks of the toilers? Was this not the "free association of the producers" for administering their common affairs without a bureaucratic state machine and deceitful politicians of which the Latin syndicalists had dreamt? The Bolshevik revolution thus appeared as the latest of the great democratic revolutions of Europe—but this time with the working class and not the bourgeoisie victoriously in the van.

Yet in fact the power of the Soviets had only been a passing phase in the Russian revolution, to be quickly superseded by the rule of the Bolshevik Party. That party, created in the underground struggle against Tsarism, was of a type unknown in Western and Central Europe—a centralised instrument for seizing and keeping power, controlled from the top, with all initiative in the hands of the leadership; and it quickly proceeded to build up a more powerful state machine than Russia had ever known, and to establish its permanent monopoly or organisation and propaganda. What had begun as the last of the democratic popular revolutions of Europe thus turned into the first of the totalitarian revolutions of the 20th century.

BUT if the revolutionary Marxists and Syndicalists of the West were attracted to the Bolsheviks by a misunderstanding of their true historical rôle, there was a comparable misunderstanding in reverse. For Lenin saw in these courageous anti-war minorities the vanguard whom the huge organised armies of the Western working class were bound to follow. Were not the bulk of the organised workers everywhere

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state rather than from its overthrow.

During the years of the revolutionary post-war crisis, the illusions which had given birth to the Comintern could be maintained without serious doubts on either side. In the summer of 1920, when the Red Army stood at the gates of Warsaw, some of the great mass parties of European labour asked for admission to the Second World Congress of the Comintern. At this point the Bolsheviks, seemingly confirmed in their expectations, decided to "fence in" the true doctrine so that no "treacherous leader" should be able to gatecrash into their fold: the famous Twenty-One Conditions laid down strict rules of international, centralist discipline with which any party would have to conform to obtain admission. Up till then, the split in the international Labour movement had been a by-product of the war, liable to disappear with the end of the post-war crisis. Now it became permanent—thanks to the creation of a permanent institution which transferred the Bolshevik principles of organisation to the international plane. The temporary conflict between a revolutionary and a reformist wing *within* the democratic Labour movement was transformed into the permanent conflict between the democratic Labour movement on one side, and a non-democratic, centralised world party, run by the rulers of the Soviet state, on the other.

bent on the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism? Was not the patriotic or passive attitude of the great social-democratic parties during the war manifest proof of the betrayal of a few, corrupted leaders, whom the masses—apart from a thin privileged stratum of "working-class aristocrats"—would quickly desert as soon as the authentic banner of militant revolutionary socialism was raised again? That belief was indeed the main reason for Lenin's insistence on founding a new Communist International, without the treacherous leaders.

But the belief proved wholly mistaken. The revolutionary minorities of the Western Labour movement were not a vanguard, but a remnant. They represented an heroic tradition that was dying fast—the tradition of a working class which had no democratic rights and no stake in the rapidly growing industrial society. As the franchise broadened and democratic institutions spread from Western to Central Europe, as organised labour learnt to use the machinery of parliamentary legislation and collective bargaining to defend its interests and transform society, the revolutionary impulses of the pre-democratic age weakened in the advanced industrial countries, and the organised workers came more and more to expect the fulfilment of their aspirations from the gradual conquest of the democratic

BUT it took the ebbing of the revolutionary flood, the years of defeat for international Communism and of isolation for Russia, to make this new character of the split visible and to reveal the original misunderstanding. As the Communists of the industrial West failed to seize power, Lenin and his colleagues began to think of their foreign comrades more and more as pupils who must learn from their own successful tactics and methods of organisation; while as the Bolsheviks, forced back from Utopia by isolation, had to grant concessions to peasants, technical specialists, and even to foreign capitalists, the Russia of the New Economic Policy appeared less and less as a natural model to the revolutionary radicals of the Western working class. One by one, the Western Communists of the first hour discovered how little resemblance the Bolshevik dictatorship bore to the proletarian democracy of their dreams, how it was in fact holding the balance between the various classes of Russian society as an independent force based on its control of the state machine; while the Russian leaders in turn realised with dismay that the most gifted Western leaders who had rallied to them in the war and post-war years were not the tough technicians of power, the professional revolutionaries whom they needed, but were infected with

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"petty bourgeois democratic ideas."

As every new defeat of the Western Communist parties led to bitter internal conflicts, with the Russians openly intervening to decide the policies and remove their leaders, this mutual disillusion became manifest. The documents of the early twenties are full of the strange scholastic disputes over the tactics of the "revolutionary offensive" or the "united front" in which these struggles were fought out—disputes which were then conducted in public with remarkable "democratic" frankness, even though the victory of the Russian leaders was always assured in advance. Thus, every year saw some of the outstanding pioneers of Communism in the West break with the Comintern, amidst gloomy warnings that no true revolutionary parties could ever develop under the constant manipulations of Moscow, only negligible sects without roots in the Labour movement of their own countries.

In fact, however, it was the idealistic old Western revolutionaries who gradually faded into sectarian impotence as the main stream of the Labour movement pursued its reformist course, while the Communist parties, led by rootless "*apparachiki*" obedient to Moscow, remained at least a *potential* force, thanks to their

new form of organisation. And as the Fascists and Nazis came to apply the Bolshevik invention of the centralised state-party and the one-party state for their own purposes, Stalin gradually realised what Lenin had never been conscious of—that this instrument of power can rely on different classes in turn, and can also be applied in a parliamentary democracy to seize power by "legal" means. It was in the Popular Front period that Western Communist parties first began to acquire the manoeuvrability—and, as Spain showed, the ruthlessness—of their Fascist opponents. But the full technique for achieving a Communist dictatorship by "legal" means was only applied in Eastern Europe after the Second World War.

What the Moscow twentieth congress has now proclaimed as the new discovery of the "peaceful road to socialism," i.e. to Communist dictatorship, has in fact been Stalin's original contribution to international Communist strategy, though his ungrateful heirs forgot to mention the fact. Their own new step is merely to authorise the application of this method in countries not bordering the Soviet bloc: to that extent, the "Leninist revival" consists in the bolder use of Stalinist techniques of power for Leninist, world-revolutionary aims.

Richard Lowenthal

A PHILOSOPHY FOR LITTLE ENGLAND

"IT is pleasant to record an English victory abroad . . ."—so began a recent report in *The Times* of a football match between English and Finnish teams. I at first assumed this was intended as light irony. But no; it turned out to be just plain insularity. In that same issue, there was a three-inch story, buried at the bottom of the second sports page, on the victory of Sugar Ray Robinson over Bobo Olsen in a fight for the world's middleweight championship. There are still parts of the globe, one knows, where world championships and world records are regarded as real news. Here, absolute performance excites less interest than does the relative performance of an Englishman. Thus the reports in the British press of the Marciano-Cockell fight explained in great detail, and with much maudlin flag-waving, how gallantly Cockell had lost, and rather neglected telling us how Marciano had won—or even that it was a nondescript specimen of a prize-fight, when all was said and done.

The flag, it seems, has followed the empire—

all the way home. One can even say that it has rushed home in undue and precipitate haste. Britain is still considerably more than a little island off the coast of Europe; "Little England" is more a state of mind than a fact. But as a state of mind, it is one of the significant facts about Britain today. It sets the dominant tone for English politics, which avoids the strenuous and seeks contentment in urbane—or should it be suburban?—accommodation. It also characterises the post-war English novel: whatever it is that Lucky Jim wants, it stops short of heaven and this wide world too. And it is the outstanding feature of contemporary British philosophy.

"Love does loathe the disdainfull nicetee"—or so Spenser thought. But when one picks up a collection of recent British essays on political philosophy,* one discovers the extent to which the love of truth that is philosophy can be transformed into disdainful nicety, precisely. These

* *Philosophy, Politics, and Society*. Edited by PETER LASLETT. Basil Blackwell. 18s.