

cable working-class origin, who rose as high but by less ruthless methods. Bevin had many great qualities. He had one great defect: nobody called him Uncle.

A. J. P. Taylor

Intellectual Communists

Communism and British Intellectuals. By NEAL WOOD. Gollancz. 21s.

"IT MIGHT be said that the *raison d'être* of the Communist Party of Great Britain is the search for the breaking point of every intellectual in its midst." This is one of Dr. Neal Wood's conclusions in his competent, informative, yet rather flat account of Communism's impact on British intellectuals. This breaking-point comes when respect for truth and human dignity reasserts itself; when millennial dreams and fraudulent abstractions are seen for what they are. When this happens the myths woven by the Party bureaucrats (a minority of whom are ex-intellectuals themselves) become patently indecent. The new lines of Mr. R. P. Dutt or Mr. James Klugmann square too uncomfortably with the old: and the intellectual re-enters, through expulsion from the Party or by resignation, the less lunatic world of "bourgeois" fact. For some, as Dr. Wood recalls, the Soviet-Nazi pact was the breaking-point; for others, the Soviet invasion of Finland. Yet others, having swallowed countless earlier atrocities, waited for the Hungarian tragedy of 1956. Even now, four years later, some intellectuals (Professors J. D. Bernal and Thomson, Drs. Cornforth, Dobb, and Arnold Kettle) remain whence all but they have fled—adorning the editorial board of *Marxism Today*, the Communist Party's theoretical journal.

These experiences—which neither Dr. Wood nor myself have ever shared—form a tragicomic footnote to political history. For the Communist Party has never been a major force in our affairs—and the intellectuals which it recruits have never controlled it. Indeed the number of intellectuals prepared to lie for Stalin was never spectacularly high. Yet they were numerous enough, especially in the '30s and '40s—and Dr. Wood's story is an instructive but repulsive one. He deals in some detail with the more prominent cases—and dissects with special care the allegedly "red decade" of the '30s. Here we have the whole familiar complex—the thin moods of the '20s eroded by Fascism and depression; scholars and scientists thirsting for "action;" an extended seed-bed of nihilism, self-hatred, and mock-heroics; the growing disillusion (underwritten by Harold Laski and the

Webbs) with the ethos of liberalism; the symbolic, if temporary, hold of Communism upon a Toynbee, a Spender, and a Strachey.

The sources of this episode are clearly very varied. The intellectual and psychological attraction of Marxism should not be discounted. Many stalwarts of the *Left Book Club* imbibed and purveyed a pseudo-science of society; then, as now, there was a market for fake sociology. They also sought the best of two worlds—an *élite* position in the Party plus an ecstatic union with the "masses." They got the *worst* of both worlds—they never penetrated the Party's *élite*, and the "masses," anyway, were not interested in the Party. But the basic drive was the reaction to Fascism and depression. In other circumstances the nihilism and self-hatred would have found more personal and less political channels.

Dr. Wood pays especial attention to the public school and Oxbridge converts to Stalinism— young people impelled to the Party by liberal consciences or rebellious individualism. These people were really as few as they were conspicuous and they left no lasting mark on our political culture. Nor were they ever ideal Bolshevik material. It is true that several of them became Party overseers—not least Mr. Klugmann, whose varying assessments of Tito are pleasingly recorded by Dr. Wood. Messrs. Burgess and Maclean were of this same generation: they were to go far in the service of the State (and of the Party) before fleeing to Moscow. But the bulk of those with whom Dr. Wood is concerned (at least the non-scientists) were, by Bolshevik standards, cast in a less heroic mould. The consciences which pushed them into the Party led them out again—they never made the Bolshevik grade, requiring as it did a zeal for moral absolutes, a contempt for moral restraints, and an undying scorn for ordinary flesh-and-blood human beings.

The scions of great Liberal houses whose doings Dr. Wood describes were perhaps less important than they believed. It is a pity that, through lack of data or excess of prudence, Dr. Wood did not widen his sample. There were other more significant circles at work—men and women of lower social status in universities other than Oxbridge, and a small, unpublicised, but influential group (including many Continental emigrés) who were *de facto* Russian agents. This latter group did not always work within Party channels. (Many of its members were, for reasons of nationality, ineligible for membership of the British Party.) But it was in close contact with selected Party members in the universities—especially in London. Years later, in 1952, several members of this Comintern group perished in the "Slansky purge" in Prague. I



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remember vividly the dismay this brought to several of their former British contacts, now ageing and padded by respectable jobs.

Dr. Wood also underestimates the "front organisations" which the Party promotes. These bodies are far from negligible. The Association of Scientific Workers, for example, "whose apparatus at least since the beginning of the war has been in the hands of Communists and sympathisers" is now 11,000 strong and its leadership interlocks with that of many other Communist-controlled societies. Yet Dr. Wood seems to feel that "from one standpoint the 'front organisation' performs a definite service for British democracy . . . it tends to prevent the complete estrangement of the Communist from society by providing a point of contact with the non-Communist." This is so general a remark that it may be true—now and again. More continuous is a far greater disservice to democracy—that of trumpeting and legitimising the narrow Party line.

These blemishes do not destroy the merit of Dr. Wood's enquiry. It has, of course, drawn the fire of the *New Left* scholastics, the *Daily Worker*, the Trotskyists, and Mr. A. J. P. Taylor. These authorities all agree that Dr. Wood lacks sympathy with Marxism—several of them abuse the Rockefeller Foundation for supporting him in his impious research. Much of this reaction, in the age of coexistence, is easy to understand. Many people, for excellent reasons, would prefer the subject to be forgotten. What is more—McCarthy's ghost still walks, inhibiting any critical review of Communist strength or Marxist affiliations. Incipient fashions, indeed, make me wonder whether another such book might not be needed twenty years from now. For we may be on the verge of a significant, if limited, revival of "intellectual" Communism. It might seem paradoxical for an "affluent society" to harbour such a revival—and, of course, it smacks of "McCarthyism" even to suggest it! Yet there are straws in the wind too obvious to ignore. Political attitudes are slow to change—but a new universe of discourse and action is already emerging. Central to this new phase are the expansion of Soviet power, the real or reputed changes in Soviet society, and the decline of the Labour Party here at home. Our neo-Marxists (if not the Communist Party itself) already sense the opportunities this phase may provide. How many young men will hedge their bets—more out of opportunism than through nihilism or self-hate? Before they do so, let them browse in the pages of this book. If they mark its lesson, they might preserve Dr. Wood from writing its sequel.

Julius Gould

The End of Militarism

A History of Militarism. By ALFRED VAGTS.
Hollis & Carter. 42s.

"LOOKING to the future, the curse of the world is European militarism," the American General Tasker Bliss remarked at the end of the First World War. It was a view that was a central part of Wilsonian thinking about the peace settlement; and it survived into the Second World War. "Our own objectives are clear," President Roosevelt said in his message to Congress on January 6th, 1942. "The objective of smashing the militarism imposed by war lords upon their enslaved people. . . ." Professor Vagts was clearly inspired by sentiments of this kind when he set out in the 1930s to try and define this "militarism" which liberals and socialists of all kinds had been consistently denouncing for the past century. But one cannot help feeling that, as he worked, the subject of his study eluded him, and that, instead of being a single entity that could be conveniently attacked and slain, "Militarism" turned out to be the name somewhat misleadingly applied to a number of different complicated historical and social situations. Like many historians who try to write the history of an abstract noun, Professor Vagts finds himself recording a number of concrete particular cases.

At the start of his book he realised the difficulty of the task he had set himself, and he makes a distinction between "militarism" and "the military way." The latter is "marked by a primary concentration of men and materials on winning specific objectives of power with the utmost efficiency." Militarism, on the other hand, is unlimited in its scope: "it may permeate all society and become dominant over all industry and arts. . . . Militarism displays the qualities of caste and cult, authority and belief." The distinction is a valid one; yet it is hard to work out in practice, and, indeed, Dr. Vagts soon tacitly abandons it.

There are only a few societies, and then only for brief periods, which are militaristic in his sense. (The most interesting perhaps is Japan before and during the Second World War, which fulfils nearly all Professor Vagts' criteria, and which he might have made more of.) Even the most often quoted example of "militarism," Prussia, was never wholly a military state. It was certainly a society which displayed the qualities of caste; its traditions were certainly the object of cult, especially among those who did not feel themselves to belong to the military caste. Yet Prussian militarism never became "dominant over all industry and arts;" and the cult of an efficient civilian bureaucracy was as