

ance Sheet of a New Civilization

BY HAROLD J. LASKI

all the errors
es that have
ed the Rus-
it is the one
world today
well-nigh uni-
all-nigh uni-
the power
sted interest
orporate well-
ing. is no unemploy-
ment. There is a continuous rise
in the curve of material well-
being. Illiteracy has been finally
conquered. An end has been
made of things like anti-Semi-
tism and the color war. In such
fields as crime and racial rela-
tions discoveries have been
made, and applied, which I be-
lieve to be of seminal impor-
tance to the world. Although I
shall make in later para-
graphs important qualifications
of the statement, I do agree,
broadly, with the conclusion
reached by Mr. and Mrs. Webb
in their just published "Soviet
Communism,"* that the salva-
tion of mankind depends upon
its adoption of the principles of
Russian social organization. It
represents, in my judgment, the next
stage in the evolution of any political so-
ciety which wishes, first, to be the master
of its own destiny, and, second, to make
its relations of production correspond to
the possibilities of its forces of produc-
tion. Only by the acceptance of its pre-
mises can we hope to solve that paradox
of poverty in the midst of plenty which is
now the curse of capitalist civilization.

"Soviet Communism" is being de-
servedly hailed as by all odds the most
remarkable book its great theme has
so far produced. It has all the merits
which have made the Webbs the supreme
English sociologists of our time. It is based
on massive investigation. It sees its sub-
ject as a whole. It has the Webb "flair" for
the way the institutions work. There is
hardly an aspect of Soviet civilization that
is left untouched and it is fair to say that
there is no aspect discussed upon which
they do not shed illumination. No one is
entitled to speak of Russia who has not
read this book. It marks a definite epoch



HAROLD J. LASKI

in the understanding of the greatest his-
torical event since the French Revolution.

The substance of Mr. and Mrs. Webb's
conclusions may be briefly summarized.
They salute the results of the Revolution
as definitely beneficent. They deny that
the system is a dictatorship of the classic
kind; on the contrary, they believe that
a more real democracy exists in Russia
than in any country in the world. They
think that Soviet experience has demon-
strated the possibility of successful plan-
ning, once the instruments of production
are publicly owned. They are impressed
by the depth and extent of Soviet experi-
ence in judicial work, in education, in
public medicine, in the organization of
technical and scientific research. They
believe that what they happily term "the
vocation of leadership" marks a turning
point in the evolution of social forms.
They clearly regard the appeal of com-
munism as not less profound than that of
the historic religions, which it has, in-
deed, been largely successful in replac-
ing. They are satisfied that a generally
classless society is in process of construc-
tion, and that only defeat in war can pre-

vent its successful achievement.
They argue that, sooner or
later, the world will have to
imitate the ends and the tech-
nique of the new Russia. How
that imitation will be accom-
plished they do not attempt
to decide. So stark a summary
necessarily does grave injustice
to the richness of the material
with which the Webbs support
their conclusions. For my own
part, save for certain important
exceptions, I see no answer to
their case.

Having said so much, let me
turn to one phase of the Webbs'
book in which I think their
treatment is defective. They
speak with some sharpness of
that "disease of orthodoxy"
which afflicts the ruling party
in Russia, and it is evident that
they recognize the desirability
of a greater intellectual free-
dom than Russia now enjoys.
They are not, either, happy
over some of the activities of
the G. P. U., though I note that
they accept the orthodox inter-
pretation of what followed the
recent Kirov assassination. On

both counts, I think, Mr. and Mrs. Webb
have taken the evidence far too lightly.
Ideological differences have been penal-
ized in Russia with a drastic sever-
ity it is impossible to defend. A con-
trolled uniformity of thought has been
produced by the relentless working of
the party machine which is incompat-
ible with the best creative work and
difficult for the best of Russia's own
friends to defend. I give two examples.
I agree with the Webbs that in the
doctrinal conflict between Stalin and
Trotsky the former was right and the lat-
ter wrong; more, I think it probable that
Stalin's victory was necessary to the salva-
tion of the Revolution. But that does not

Next  Week

WEALTH AND CULTURE

By EDUARD C. LINDEMAN

Reviewed by Charles A. Beard

YOUNG MR. DISRAELI

By ELSWYTH THANE

Reviewed by Wilbur Cortez Abbott

* SOVIET COMMUNISM: A New Civilization?
By Sidney and Beatrice Webb. New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons. 1936. 2 vols. \$7.50.

justify the way in which post-1927 Soviet historians have deliberately falsified the history of 1917-22 in order to magnify the part Stalin then played and to diminish the role of Trotsky. Men who produce history to order must play with truth in a way fatal to honesty. Anyone who reads such party histories as those which go under the names of Yaroslavsky and of Popov and compare them with that produced some twenty years ago under official auspices by Linoviev will realize that the censorship the change has implied is definitely discreditable to the present rulers of Russia. It is also, I think, fruitless; for the pre-1927 evidence which exists outside Russia is fatal to the acceptance of such falsifications. I do not doubt that Stalin is a remarkable man. But I do not think, either, that his legacy to world socialism will be all that it might be if his supporters magnify his achievement by methods like these. He is, I believe, too big a man to need them; and men who stoop to these methods for the retention of power do profound moral injury to the cause they represent.

My second instance is the exile of political prisoners amid circumstances of great harshness. Some of them are Zionists—I write as one with little interest in Palestine—who ask only for the chance to go to Palestine. They are prevented from doing so and are often treated in a way that dishonors the regime. This is true, also, of the treatment of many social democrats, as I can myself testify from personal knowledge. Mr. and Mrs. Webb, I think, treat this body of evidence far too light-heartedly. They seem to have no conception either of the price mankind has had to pay for such liberty of thought as it has won or of the cost its suppression has always involved. A great deal of my energy is devoted to protest against German and Italian brutality to Jews and communists; I think I have no moral alternative but to protest. For me, while Thälmann, Ossietzky, and their like remain in prison all of us remain in prison also. But how can I comfortably join with communists in attack upon their jailers, when, without any trial, hundreds of Russians, none of whom is guilty of any act against the Soviet government, have been imprisoned not less relentlessly there? Mr. and Mrs. Webb have no answer to this problem. It is one which makes their denial of a dictatorship in Russia futile; for if Russia were not a dictatorship it would not need methods of this kind to assure its authority.

That it is necessary to deal sternly with men who plot the overthrow of the regime I do not doubt; but a law of treason is amply effective for such men. Those of whom I speak are the victims of that "disease of orthodoxy" of which the Webbs write with justifiable contempt. Many of them would serve Russia gladly,



JOSEF STALIN

From "Stalin" by Henri Barbusse
(Macmillan).

given the opportunity. Do we who believe in the greatness of the new Russia serve her best by suppressing the true implications of this attitude? I cannot think so. On the contrary, I believe that were Stalin to reverse the policy for which the Communist Party in Russia now stands in this matter he would immensely increase its prestige and authority all over the world. But a communism which operates an inquisition on grounds indistinguishable from those of its predecessor does a disservice which the Webbs place in a wholly inadequate perspective to the greatest ideal of modern times.

One other aspect of this problem is worth annotation because, though the Webbs emphasize its reality, they do not treat it with sufficient emphasis. The "disease of orthodoxy," in the context of the communist international, is in no small degree responsible for those divisions in the working-class movement which in considerable part explain the ease of fascist triumph in Europe. That temper has produced in communists the world over a casuistry of method wholly indifferent on many—too many—occasions to simple honesty and objective truth. No one admires more than I do the superb courage they have so universally shown in the face of danger. But no one can seriously deny that their belief in the end has too often caused them to stoop to means incapable of justification on any showing. The price they have been compelled to pay for this is heavy; but the price the labor movements of Europe have paid is heavier still. What I should have liked to find in the Webbs' book—what is, I believe, absent from it—is a full explanation of what it is in communism that is responsible for this attitude. Sometimes one has been tempted to think that they preferred a fascist victory to a social democratic triumph. That,

now, is officially contradicted by the new policy adopted last summer by the Congress of the Communist International. But it is a policy which comes only years after that same congress had built an abyss of suspicion and antagonism between itself and orthodox labor parties by its theory of social democracy as social fascism. How could a policy as futile as this ever have been urged by a man of the stature of Stalin? Mr. and Mrs. Webb do not even attempt to answer this problem. Yet for those who, like myself, believe that the united front of the left forces is the one way to save civilization, it remains a problem that it is urgent to answer.

One other general remark is worth making. Critics of Soviet Russia often insist that new classes are arising there, and point to the wide differences in income which exist in Russia as the proof of their argument. It is one of the best features of the Webbs' book that they decisively dispose of this view. The whole difference between the income-scheme of Soviet Russia and that of the rest of the world lies in the fact that in Russia income does not mean the possession of social power. No man in Russia is significant by virtue of the income he possesses; no man, either, can control the lives of others by virtue of that income. It is the outcome only of a social function assessed in value by its relevance to general well-being; and the opportunity of access to that function is more genuinely equal than in any other community in the world. The significance of this position needs no emphasis from me. It must be read in the context of the fact that the effective leaders of the party impose upon themselves a continuous and rigorous asceticism the more impressive the more fully it is known. From this angle, in my own judgment, Soviet Russia has discovered perspectives of motivation in matters of social constitution that open a new epoch in the history of mankind.

It is, I think, some fifty years since the Webbs made their first contribution to social theory. Looking back on the record of those years, it is difficult not to feel humble in its presence. Again and again they have set new horizons; again and again they have compelled new valuations of old ideas. There is a fundamental sense in which this is the greatest of all their works. Massive in conception, courageous in ideas, pioneering in method, it sets a new standard for works in this field. No one can afford to neglect it. The more widely it is read, the more hope there is that men will understand the perspective of their lives.

Harold J. Laski is professor of political science in the University of London. He is well known in this country where in the past he has lectured at Harvard and Yale and where his books and magazine articles have had a wide public.

The A. E. F. Passes in Review

THE AMERICAN ARMY IN FRANCE 1917-1919. By James G. Harbord, Major General, U. S. Army, Retired List. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1936. \$5.

Reviewed by JOHN T. WINTERICH

IN 1886, the year in which John Joseph Pershing was graduated from the United States Military Academy, two young Kansans attempted unsuccessfully to assail that stronghold. One of them, had the fates ordained otherwise, might today be Major General William Allen White, U.S.A. Retired, instead of Editor White of the *Emporia Gazette*. The other, James Guthrie Harbord, taught school for two years and enlisted in the army as a private in 1889. It was an era in which the common soldier was regarded as considerably lower than the angels; an occasional officer would address Harbord as "my man," which "made me feel like doing murder." He mounted the ladder rung by rung—corporal, sergeant, into commissioned status—and thirty years after his enlistment he put on the twin stars of a major general in the regular establishment. As a climax to his military career he commanded the Marine Brigade in the holocaust of Belleau Wood, the Second Division in the spearhead of the Soissons attack which definitely placed in Foch's hands an initiative he never relinquished, and that third of the A.E.F.—668,000 men—who constituted the Services of Supply, performing a task of equipping and provisioning without parallel in history, and forwarding to the combat forces a matériel whose bulk ran into astronomical figures.

It is the sort of success story that is dear to the American heart, but it is a success story that cannot be read in "The American Army in France." Harbord's career up to 1917 is here summarized in a three-page preface which his publishers obviously and properly insisted on his putting into the record. Personal experiences have their due share in his account of the A.E.F., but in the recital of them Harbord consistently seeks to play the part of detached observer. It is a terse, meaty chronicle, and in setting it down he has drawn on the last great repository of essential data concerning the American adventure in France—his own recollection of it, aided by his generally adequate interpretation of the printed and written record. There is little of that formal and general-orderish writing that bogs down so much military reporting. There is a seasoning of humor, there are dashes of tartness, deft and dry characterizations of sundry notables, touches of drama, sudden sorties of eloquence that are heightened by their very restraint. Not often does he indulge himself in analysis of his own emotions, but there

are times when he appreciates the fact that the omission of such a revelation would be even more revealing. Thus, of the fighting in the desperate sector northwest of Château-Thierry:

The recollections of a Brigade Commander are only valuable as the testimony of an official reporter of the Homeric deeds of other men. The world is little concerned with the feelings of such a witness, and his impressions at the time. Yet it is true that the responsibility for orders that send men into battle, when it may mean death to men that you know personally, when it may maim and destroy men with whom you may have spoken within the hour, is not lightly to be borne by any man. It leaves invisible scars, and the very recollection of it brings a spiritual humility of soul.

He asks his reader to consider

the insufficient information on which you are sometimes obliged to send men forth to die; the decision of whether to go forward or to retire; the consciousness of the cost at which every advantage is won; the combat reports without place-name or hour of sending and therefore worthless; the rumors that ran; the runners that never arrive; the agony of the dressing station, and the casualty lists.

Recording his feelings at the moment of making the decision that most closely concerned himself, when, with the Soissons-Château-Thierry road crossed and the bitterly contested evacuation of the Marne salient under way, Harbord was summoned to G.H.Q. and asked (not ordered) to take command of the Services

of Supply, he approaches rueful flippancy in his recital of his emotions:

It was indeed a farewell to arms for me. . . . I had allowed myself to dream of being a Corps Commander, perhaps in time of even commanding an Army. The night wore away with no comfort for me in the renunciation I felt I should make when I saw the General the next morning. I saw him early at the office and told him again that I would go anywhere that he desired and attempt any duty to which he thought me equal. It was arranged that I should hurry back to the Division, turn over the command to General Lejeune and meet General Pershing at Tours forty-eight hours later. Both of us thought he should meet me there and that we should go over the base ports together. Someone had to be along to explain my being there. It had not been the habit to reward successful commanders of troops in battle by sending them to the S.O.S.

The task that faced him at Tours was formidable beyond all comparison. The closest available parallel—the British supply problem in South Africa at the turn of the century—is distant indeed. At 8.15 one August morning during his first inspection tour of his area an order reached the Gièvres depot from the advance area for 1,250,000 cans of tomatoes, 1,000,000 pounds of sugar, 600,000 cans of corned beef, 750,000 pounds of canned hash, and 150,000 pounds of dried beans. By 6.15 that evening this full market-basket, stowed in 457 freight cars, was rolling east. The Q.M.C. imported from home more than half a billion pounds of flour which it was prepared to convert into bread at the rate of three million loaves a day. Army-operated gardens produced 75,000,000 pounds of green vegetables. Up to the Armistice,



BRIGADIER GENERAL HARBORD (SEATED) WITH HIS STAFF, MAY, 1918
Standing: Major Harry Lay, Major Holland M. Smith, Lieut. Fielding S. Robinson, Lieut. R. Norris Williams II, Interpreter Martin Legasse.
From "The American Army in France."