CHAPTER XXX

CONCLUSION: COMMUNISM AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY FROM 1914 TO 1931

IN my original plan for the fourth volume of my *History of Socialist Thought* I intended to cover the entire period from the outbreak of world war in 1914 to the renewed outbreak of 1939. Surely, I said to myself, a period of a quarter of a century is not too long, considering that both my first volume and my second had spans of more than forty years — broadly, from 1789 to 1850, and from 1850 to 1889. True, for the ensuing period of twenty-five years, from 1889 to 1914, I had needed to swell my third volume out to upwards of a thousand pages. As soon as I set to work to develop my plan in detail I found that my original plan would not do, because I could not, without losing the essential unity of treatment, cover in a single study both the Revolutions that accompanied and ensued upon the first world war and the period of counter-revolution and increasing international tension that set in with the world depression of the early 'thirties and the victory of Nazism in Germany. I therefore altered my plan and decided, after some hesitation, to make a break round about 1931, so as to take in only the earlier phases of the great depression and to concentrate attention on the consequences of the great Russian Revolution of 1917 in dividing the world Socialist movement into two bitterly contending factions between which it was very difficult for any intermediate or deviant bodies of opinion to survive, or at any rate to exert any powerful influence on the course of events.

The Second International, which ran its course from 1889 to its collapse in August 1914, did stand, despite the sharp conflicts of policy that arose within it, for a conception of Socialism as a single and fundamentally united world force. This unity, broken in 1914 in the field of organisation, disappeared in the realm of thought as well as of action as a

consequence of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and of the appearance of Communism with its gospel of World Revolution on the Russian model. For the Communism of the Third International from 1919 onwards involved a deliberate and world-wide attempt to split the Socialist and working-class movements of all countries into sharply opposed factions contending for the allegiance of the workers, and led to the coexistence not only of rival Communist and anti-Communist Labour and Socialist Parties, but also of contending Trade Union movements and to perpetual conflicts inside the Trade Unions in every country. In these circumstances there was no longer even the shadow of a single world Socialist movement animated by a common purpose of overthrowing capitalism and setting up Socialism in its place. Instead of uniting to destroy capitalism, the rival Socialist movements became intent on fighting each other ; and those who attempted to stress what they had in common, in the hope of reuniting them, found their efforts everywhere thwarted by the zealots on both sides. In Communist eyes, the reformists, and presently the revolutionary 'deviationists' as well — that is, the so-called 'Trotskyists' — stood branded as 'social traitors', while, on the other side, the main body of these alleged 'traitors' loudly asserted that there could be no Socialism without 'democracy' — meaning by democracy, parliamentary government based on a structure of contending Parties and majority rule under conditions of universal suffrage and 'free' elections.

Accordingly, anyone who sets out to write the history of Socialism, in either thought or action, after 1917 has to study no longer a single movement or tendency, but at least two — at any rate, unless he is prepared to narrow his conception of Socialism by excluding completely either the one or the other. Such exclusion would be, in practice, very difficult ; for, whatever view the writer might take concerning the claims of either group to be a true inheritor of the common Socialist tradition, he would have to deal, in practice, both with the conflict between them and with the numerous Socialist trends that cannot be fully identified with either. Even if he were prepared, as I am not, to regard the developments of thought and action in the one-Party Communist States as standing right apart from anything properly to be called Socialism, he would

have to deal with developments in other countries in which Communism has been in direct competition with non-Communist Socialism for the allegiance of the working classes and of the peasantry; and he could present no balanced or adequate account of events or theories without discussing the relations between the two. However sharply different Communism and Social Democracy, or democratic Socialism, may be in their philosophies and methods of action, it is undeniable that they do have certain common elements — for example, advocacy of public ownership and control of the essential resources and instruments of production and a belief in the historic mission of the working class in bringing about the transition from capitalism to public enterprise. The question whether this is to be done by revolutionary seizure of power by the workers, or by a Party purporting to represent them, or by a peaceable conquest of power by parliamentary action under universal suffrage, however important it may be, cannot present itself in the same form in all countries; for, on the one hand, not all possess the parliamentary institutions of self-government which the second of these methods presupposes, and, on the other, in some that do possess these institutions there is no real question of revolution by violence or of the resort to one-party dictatorship. It would have been nonsense to tell the Russian Socialists at the beginning of 1917 that they ought to proceed only by constitutional parliamentary methods; and it would be no less nonsensical to offer the same advice to-day to Socialists in Saudi Arabia, or Siam, or certain countries of Latin America — or to Negro Socialists in the Union of South Africa. Equally it would be nonsense to urge the Socialists of the Scandinavian countries or of Great Britain or the U.S.A to direct their efforts towards a revolution for setting up a 'one-party' dictatorship of the proletariat — though neither of these absurdities has failed to find advocates; for no limit can be set to the follies of which individuals are capable when they start generalising on the foundation of special cases which they mistake for matters of universal principle.

The historian of Socialism, as soon as he advances into the period that began with the first world war and the Russian Revolutions of 1917, has, then, in my view, no way of escape from including in his survey both Communism and Social

Democracy, and therewith all the variant trends that cannot be subsumed entirely under either of these ideologies. For both, and all the variants, are heirs of the older Socialist tradition, just as both Protestantism and Romanism are heirs of a formerly united Christendom, within which heresies and schisms existed long before the Reformation.

When the general approach has been thus settled, in favour of comprehensive treatment, the historian is still in a considerable difficulty because he has to deal, not, in the main, with past quarrels on which he can hope to pass tolerably objective and dispassionate judgments or can leave his readers to judge for themselves in the light of a reasonably objective statement of the facts, but with disputes that are very much alive and will necessarily arouse both his own passions and those of his readers: so that he can hardly hope to be given the credit for stating fairly both or all sides of the questions he needs to discuss. The recent past is so entangled with the present and the future that we are all prone to look at it with our own actual and prospective attitudes and conduct very much in our minds, and to read back into it conclusions derived from these sources. Thus, our judgments of the Bolshevik Revolution and of Lenin's part in it are apt to be coloured by our view of the Soviet Union of to-day; and, on the other side, the views we take about the behaviour of parliamentary Socialists after 1918 are affected by our current attitudes towards the Parties of the Socialist International.

In relation to these matters I flatter myself that I am in a better position than many of my fellow-Socialists to be fair as between the two extreme views because I have never found myself able to accept either. I am strongly opposed, on grounds of principle, to the Communist doctrine of 'democratic centralism', which I regard as leading fatally towards centralised bureaucracy and as destructive of personal liberty and freedom of thought and action. But I am no less opposed to capitalism and to the grave social and economic inequalities it involves, and am quite unable to accept the view that it is illegitimate to take action against these wrongs except by constitutional, parliamentary means, even where such means are either unavailable or evidently ineffective. I am against violent revolution, or even unconstitutional action, where the road to fundamental

change by constitutional means is effectively open to the people ; but I am unable to agree that democracy is a necessary prerequisite of Socialism, if by 'democracy' is meant the exclusive use of parliamentary methods in countries where no tradition of parliamentary government in fact exists and there are no parliamentary institutions capable of being used to bring about the change to Socialism. This attitude has ranged me, throughout my adult life, among the adherents of left-wing non-Communist Socialism — a position which, in my own country, I might have found it very difficult to sustain had I been an active instead of an 'armchair' or academic politician. I have never, even for a moment, considered the possibility of becoming a Communist — the whole idea revolts me ; but I have often been deeply exasperated by what have seemed to me plain departures from Socialist principle by the Labour and Socialist Parties and movements of the West, and I have been determined never to be led by my hostility to Communism into any sort of alliance against it with the declared enemies of Socialism. This has often placed me in a somewhat isolated position, which I have been able to endure the less uncomfortably because I have never allowed myself to become an active participant in politics, save as a writer fortunate enough to live in a country where I have been able to speak my mind freely. I have thus been in a position to watch, and within these self-imposed limits to take part in, the conflicts of opinion without becoming at all deeply involved in them as a spokesman of any particular party or faction, though I have been a member of the Labour Party for nearly fifty years and have held office first in the Guild Socialist movement and thereafter, for the past quarter of a century, in the reorganised Fabian Society and New Fabian Research Bureau. I am not suggesting that this need enable me to be impartial, or even objective, in reviewing the history of Socialism during the period studied in this volume ; but I do think it gives me some advantage over those who have been drawn entirely into the orbit of either Communism or parliamentary Social Democracy of the Western kind.

The epoch of Socialist history covered in the present volume is that in which, largely as an outcome of the first world war, Communism developed as a world-wide challenger, on the one hand, of capitalist imperialism and of the existing social

order, and, on the other, of every sort of reformist or moderate evolutionary Socialism. This double challenge continues today ; but it assumed, in my view, a new and different form when Fascism, in its German shape as Nazism, came to power in Germany in the midst of the great world depression of the early 'thirties. Fascism, to be sure, had conquered Italy well before that, and Fascist tendencies had emerged in a number of other countries — for example, in Hungary and in the Balkans — not to mention China. It became, however, a world danger only with the rise of Hitler ; for only in his hands did it become a third force challenging on a world scale both Socialism and Communism on the one hand and capitalist parliamentarism on the other, and thus raise the issue whether it was properly to be regarded as a new, and perhaps final, form of imperialist capitalism or as an altogether different creed and way of life. My own view, from the first, was that the latter view was the more correct, and that the world of men was faced with an inescapable challenge against which it was needful to array every opponent who could be enlisted in the struggle : so that, for the time being, resistance to Fascism became an even more urgent matter than the attempt to overturn capitalism. It was no doubt a foregone conclusion that many capitalists, above all in Germany, would take sides with the Nazis and would endeavour to use them to serve capitalist ends ; but this, to my mind, by no means proved that Nazism was simply a form of capitalism. It appeared to me as a thing fundamentally different and likely, if it prevailed, to subordinate capitalism to its own gospel of militarism and racial superiority — a much worse enemy of human decency and progress in the art of living.

This conviction that Fascism was not, and is not, simply capitalism in its last stage of open war upon the workers, but was, and is, a third force in its own right, or rather its own wrong, played its part in my decision to stop short, in the present volume, of Hitler's assumption of power in Germany and to leave over for separate treatment both the anti-Fascist struggle of the 1930s and the repercussions of Fascism on the course of events and on modes of political thinking in the Soviet Union, so as to be able to concentrate attention on the development of Socialist thought between the Revolutions of

1917 and the next few years and the appearance of the Fascist challenge in a clearly recognisable form. I have therefore been mainly concerned in the present volume, first with these revolutionary upsets and with their effects in disrupting the unity of Socialism and of the working-class movement, and thereafter with the fortunes of Socialism, including for this purpose Communism and its allies, in the post-war world up to the onset of the great depression. This, I am well aware, involves breaking the record off, in relation to some countries, at an inconvenient point ; but the countries to which this applies are not, for the most part, those to which attention needs to be mainly directed at the stage with which I am now concerned. The division between the 'twenties and the 'thirties serves well enough, not only for Germany and for most of Western Europe, including Great Britain, but also for the United States, where the depression and the Roosevelt New Deal sharply mark off the 1930s from the preceding decade, and also, I believe, for the Soviet Union, where Stalinism came to embody a radically different attitude from that of Lenin, or of Trotsky, even if this attitude was grafted upon Leninist roots.

I begin my story, then, after a preliminary chapter dealing with the impact of war on the Socialist movement in its international aspect, with the Russian Revolutions and with their impact on Socialism as a factor in world affairs. At this point, the essential point to grasp is that the Bolsheviks thought of their Revolution, not as a local or national substitution of a Socialist for a capitalist-imperialist régime, but as the first decisive step in a World Revolution to be made in its image by the workers in all other countries, and, above all, in the first instance, over the whole of Europe, with Germany as the key-point for its extension to the more advanced capitalist countries. They believed that the Revolution was destined by historic necessity to extend itself in this way, and that, unless it did so, their own local Revolution could not survive, though they were confident that, even if it were defeated for the time, it would rise again as it had done after the disasters of 1905–6. They therefore used every means in their power of fomenting revolution in other countries — above all in Germany — and of leading the revolutionary forces in Germany and elsewhere into compliance with their own conceptions, derived from what they

themselves had achieved, of the correct way of making a revolution, with very little allowance either for the widely different situations in which Socialists and Trade Unionists were placed in other countries or for the different traditions that had developed in the various national working-class movements. Immensely proud of their own achievements — and prouder still when these had held firm against the interventions of the great capitalist powers — they called upon other countries to show their admiration for the Soviet example by following it as nearly as possible to the letter and by discarding utterly every tradition of working-class and Socialist behaviour that stood in the way of close imitation of the Bolshevik model. Had not they succeeded in making the Socialist Revolution while in other, far more advanced, countries the working class, that should have taken the lead, had lagged ignominiously behind and had allowed itself to be driven to internecine butchery by the capitalist war-makers? Surely the evident task of Socialists throughout the world was to make up for lost time and carry through their own Bolshevik Revolutions, or, where they could not, at any rate make as much trouble as possible for their own ruling classes and thus divert them from mobilising their resources for the overthrow of the Soviet Union. To the Russian Bolsheviks, such action seemed a plain matter of duty and loyalty to the country that had given so momentous and inspiring a lead. 'He that is not with us is against us', seemed the evident moral to be drawn.

This was the principle on which the Bolsheviks, face to face with the immense threat of counter-revolution at home, set to work deliberately to split the world Socialist movement. That, of course, is not how they put the matter to themselves. Their purpose, as they saw it, was not to split the workers but to detach them from their traitorous leaders who were betraying the revolutionary cause. In their view, every worker was a potential revolutionary, and could be prevented from becoming one actually only by being cajoled and led astray by false guides. The future, as they envisaged it, was one, not of rival revolutionary and reformist working-class movements contending for victory, but of a single revolutionary movement face to face only with a discredited handful of reformist leaders deserted by their former mass following. The Communists of

the Soviet Union, and, under their influence, the Communist International, set out with a prodigious confidence in their power to convert the masses to their point of view. Historic necessity, they were sure, was on their side — and not only that, for the very success of their own Revolution showed that the time was ripe for others. Accordingly there could be no real question of a split that would weaken the working class by dividing it against itself. The right-wing leaders would speedily be left without followers, and would no longer matter. The real danger came from the Centrists — from those who opposed the right wing but refused to accept the Communist gospel — for they might for a time succeed in leading a section of the workers astray, though the 'contradictions' inherent in their attitude would prevent them from following any really constructive policy. In the long run they, too, were doomed to forfeit their influence; but in the short run they might attract enough support to check the spread of World Revolution. Therefore they must be fought against, even more bitterly than the right-wing leaders, by every device that could be used to undermine their influence upon the mainly well-meaning but muddle-headed workers who mistook their fine words for real revolutionary intentions.

In this spirit the Comintern drew up its Twenty-one Points, with the primary purpose of excluding all those groups which, moved by sympathy for the Bolshevik Revolution, were desirous of entering into fraternal relations with it without completely endorsing the Russian methods as applicable over all the world. In this spirit the leaders of the Comintern, urged on by Zinoviev and by the Russian Communist Party, set to work to destroy Longuet's Minoritaires (now become a majority) in France, Friedrich Adler and Otto Bauer in Austria with their Two-and-a-Half International, Serrati's all but completely Communist faction in Italy, the I.L.P. in Great Britain, and, most of all, the U.S.P.D. in Germany. What is more, they, for the most part, succeeded in this work of destruction. The U.S.P.D. was torn asunder, and its defeated minority driven into reunion with the right-wing S.P.D.; the Vienna International was forced into reunion with the revived Second International; the French Socialist Party was captured for Communism, and the Centrist group forced back into reunion with the right

wing ; and in Italy the entire Socialist movement was so disrupted as to open the door to Fascism and to overwhelm both Communists and anti-Communists in a common disaster. As to the World Revolution, it failed to happen. The Soviet Republic in Hungary was speedily overthrown and gave place to the Horthy White Terror ; the Bavarian Soviet Republic barely existed long enough to be destroyed ; the German Communist Revolution proved a dismal failure ; and in Great Britain and most of the other countries of Western Europe — not to mention the United States — no revolutionary movement of any significance ever came into being at all. Judged by the standard of its early hopes and aspirations, the Communist International was an egregious failure. Instead of leaving the right wing isolated and shorn of followers, it presented them with a large part of the former Centrist groups. Instead of bringing about World Revolution, it helped, by dividing the Socialist and working-class forces, to bring about the triumph of Fascism, first in Italy and then in Germany and over most of Eastern Europe. It became evident even to the Russians that they had grossly miscalculated the revolutionary potentialities of the world working class and that it was necessary, not indeed to revise their fundamental doctrine, but to accept the need to wait until the still confidently expected crisis of world capitalism arrived and gave rise to a renewed outburst of revolutionary feeling.

Thus, Communist thinking about the future came to be dominated more and more by the idea that world capitalism, though it had somehow managed to reconstruct itself after the dislocations of war, *must* be rapidly approaching its 'final crisis', just as Marx and Engels had believed it to be forty years earlier, when the great depression of the 1870s was on the way. That crisis, indeed, had proved to be by no means 'final', and had given rise, not to any outburst of revolutionary action, but rather to the rise of a number of Social Democratic Parties which followed an increasingly unrevolutionary line. The 'next time', however, was bound to be quite different. In it, world capitalism would dissolve through sheer inability to keep the wheels turning ; and the masses would everywhere turn to revolution as the only way of escape. Hope and confidence were thus but deferred, and not abandoned ; and in

the meantime the quintessential duty of all good Socialists was to protect the Soviet Union against its enemies, and of the rulers of the Soviet Union to demonstrate what had been previously regarded as impracticable — the establishment of 'Socialism in one country' as the model for the rest to imitate as soon as the next crisis made the time ripe.

This change of orientation, without any change in fundamental ideas, took place during the 1920s well ahead of the arrival of the crisis and, *a fortiori*, of the advent of the Nazis to power on the ruins of the Weimar Republic. It did not involve, at that stage, any fundamental revision of the Communist world outlook, though it did require an altered strategy for the Communists *in partibus infidelium*. These had to adapt themselves to a waiting policy, while standing constantly ready to rally to the Soviet Union's defence. Till the crisis came they had to do their best to combat right-wing or reformist tendencies in the Labour movements of their own countries, to win influence in the Trade Unions, and, where possible, to get themselves accepted as allies by the organisations whose leaders they intended to stab in the back at the first convenient chance. This was not an easy path to tread ; but in view of the necessary postponement of the World Revolution and of the primary obligation to defend the Soviet Union under all circumstances, no other was left open. The situation changed only when the onset of the world economic crisis and the conquest of Germany by the Nazis enforced a new line. For the crisis brought with it, not a wave of revolutionary fervour, but counter-revolution in Germany and elsewhere and, in the countries accustomed to parliamentary government, a serious temporary weakening of the working-class movement, especially in the Trade Union field, but also in that of politics. In Great Britain the eclipse of the Labour Government, though it resulted in a temporary leftward shift of working-class opinion, left the movement in a much weakened state from which it could make only a slow recovery ; and in the United States the New Deal, though followed by a great expansion of Trade Unionism into the hitherto unconquered fields of the mass-production industries, entirely failed to restore American Socialism even to the módest level it had reached in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Not only did the World Revolution, despite the widespread distress engendered by the depression, soon appear to be as far off as ever in the great capitalist countries : it had also now to face a new and plainly ruthless enemy who had no respect for the traditions of civilised behaviour that had served hitherto to modify the intensity of class conflict in the more advanced capitalist countries. It therefore became necessary for the Communists, if only in order to help in protecting the Soviet Union against the Fascist danger, to seek allies where they could, and, instead of repelling everyone who was not prepared to accept the entire Communist gospel, to call out loudly for the 'United Front' against Fascism. True, this was still a change only of 'party line', and not of basic attitude ; for the 'United Front' the Communists wanted was one that would enable them to take the lead and, as far as possible, to dominate the other groups with which they felt the need to co-operate in the anti-Fascist crusade. Where, however, as in Great Britain, they commanded only a tiny following of their own, and the achievement of the 'United Front' would have left them in a hopeless minority, their aim was in reality not so much to form a single front with their working-class opponents as to appeal to those very Centrist elements which they had previously denounced most of all, and also to win over as many as possible of the rootless intellectuals and students who were appalled by the irrationalism and brutality of the Nazi gospel. The 'thirties thus became the epoch of the 'fellow-travellers' who, eager to take part in the anti-Fascist struggle, rallied to the Communists as the most vocal and forthright enemies of Fascism without much regard for the niceties of Communist doctrine and in many cases without any real understanding of what it involved. Such recruits were the more easily gullible about what went on in the Soviet Union under Stalin because they had so little to go by in testing what they were told to believe and wished to believe, because belief seemed to rank them on the correct side in the contemporary struggle.

There is never, I know, a really good case for deceiving oneself or for allowing oneself to be deceived. There was, however, in the 1930s an eminently good case for putting the struggle against Fascism a long way ahead of all other issues. In the 1920s, on the other hand, it was a good deal harder to

know what came first — at any rate after the immediate danger of armed intervention in Russia by the Western powers had disappeared. As the New Economic Policy began to yield evident results, many who were by no means Communists had high hopes of the Soviet Union, whose economic and social planning, in their earlier stages, seemed to be having remarkable success even before the launching of the first Five-Year Plan. There were many who looked forward to a relaxation of totalitarian control as the more desperate economic shortages were overcome, and hoped that the Soviet Union would settle down to a form of Socialism not too incompatible with Western notions of the value of personal freedom and political democracy. There was, especially among the younger people, in the West as well as elsewhere, a strong desire to admire the Soviet Union and to make the most of its really remarkable economic and educational achievements. There was even, in some unexpected quarters, a tendency to admire the Communist Party for the devoted service given by its members and to contrast the looseness of the bonds holding together the adherents of Western Socialist Parties with the rigorous discipline of the Communists — greatly to the disadvantage of the former. The Webbs, with their massive study, *Soviet Communism, a New Civilisation ?* (1935), later became the most vocal spokesmen of this attitude. In the 'twenties and early 'thirties the Soviet Union was wide open to tourists from many countries, most of whom, even if they were critical of the totalitarian aspects, came back with strong praise of the economic and educational progress that was being made.

It is, no doubt, possible to argue that many Socialists who, in the 1920s, expressed admiration for the economic and social achievements of the Soviet Union were not really moved by admiration of these achievements, but were in a mood to admire whatever the Soviet Union achieved, irrespective of its real quality. It was, of course, bound to be evident to any visitor or to any student who really studied the facts that the Soviet Union was a very poor country and that its standards of living were immensely inferior to those of the capitalist West. What was admired was thus not the level of achievement actually reached either economically or socially, but rather the immense effort that was being made to improve the economy

and to diffuse education widely among the people — or at any rate to develop advanced industrial techniques and to provide social services and education for the rapidly developing urban working class. To such admirers it was almost irrelevant how low the actual standards were : what counted was the effort to raise them, and, in doing so, to consolidate the Revolution and make the Soviet Union strong enough to stand up against the danger of capitalist encirclement and presently to rival and surpass the standards of the advanced capitalist countries. It is, of course, true that this was the spirit in which many Socialists deeply admired the Soviet Union — some of them even the more because life there seemed to offer the means of heroic living for an ideal which they failed to find in the Socialist movements of their own countries. The 'blood and sweat' of the Communist world, far from repelling such observers, stirred them to an admiration which the actual achievements did not then deserve in their own right. Only when the Soviet Union turned to mass collectivisation of the countryside, in an immense attempt to socialise the minds as well as the agricultural practices of the vast peasant population, did criticism spread from those who were actively hostile to the whole system and refused to see any good in it, to well-wishing observers who were appalled by the ruthlessness with which collectivisation was carried into effect, as well as upset by its consequences in the mass slaughter of animals and the evident mismanagement of many of the huge new state farming experiments. The great famine in the Ukraine and other areas, attributed to overhasty collectivisation as well as to harvest failure, did a good deal to alienate Western sympathy and to arouse a conflicting sympathy with the so-called *kulaks* who were the principal victims. Nevertheless, right up to 1939 much of the good-will created by the Revolutions of 1917 and the undoubted successes in industrial development remained in being among the working classes of the Western countries and among those who regarded the Soviet Union as the natural leader in the anti-Fascist struggle.

There were, however, by the later 'twenties, vigorous critics of the Soviet Union among Communists as well as among those who were offended by Russian ruthlessness in carrying policies into effect. From the moment when Trotsky was deposed

from power, or at any rate from the moment when he was driven out of Russia, his views found support among minority groups in many countries. Not until later did 'Trotskyism' become an opprobrious label employed to blacken almost any dissident Communist who found himself opposed to Stalinist discipline on any ground; but the early Trotskyists, who mostly were followers of Trotsky rather than simply opponents of Stalin, soon began to exert some disruptive influence on the monolithic discipline required from foreign Communists by the Comintern. It was natural that in many cases these groups should make common cause with other dissidents who had fallen out yet earlier with the official policies — for example, with Industrial Unionists and other left-wingers who had been partisans of democratic workers' control. The Comintern at the beginning had set out to draw into its ranks the Industrial Unionist, Syndicalist, and shop stewards' movements that in various countries had been in rebellion against the established Socialist Parties; and it had succeeded in assimilating some of these elements and in getting them to accept the doctrine that the Trade Unions should be firmly subjected to Communist Party control. There were, however, among them not a few natural rebels against discipline who found the conception of 'democratic centralism' not at all to their taste. In the Soviet Union such rebels were speedily and ruthlessly liquidated or exiled; but in other countries they were beyond the reach of the Party and could be pursued only with virulent abuse. Some of them were Anarchists and carried on their propaganda in the little Anarchist groups that have continued to exist in almost every country. Others, for example in the United States, set up short-lived dissident Communist Parties or societies; and some of them were later active in the large-scale investigation of the Trotsky affair over which the educationist John Dewey presided. None, however, of these factions was able to establish itself on any considerable scale, though in the 'thirties Trotskyist Parties made their appearance even in some Asian countries. There was never really room for a rival Communist movement to build itself up in opposition to the disciplined influence of the Comintern with its Russian backing. There could be no more than 'splinters' quarrelling both with everyone else and among themselves and ineffective because

they had no means of getting a hearing beyond quite narrow circles.

From the very moment when the great dispute between Stalin and Trotsky came to a head, it was exceedingly difficult to discover what the real substance of the quarrel was. It began largely, as we saw,[1] with Trotsky's well-merited attack on the bureaucratisation of the Communist Party under Stalin's influence. But it speedily ranged over a much wider field and became bewildering when Stalin appeared, within a few years of the breach, to be carrying into effect some of the policies of which Trotsky had been a leading advocate. It was Trotsky who had been among the first to stress the danger of yielding too much to the peasants and the imperative need to press on rapidly with industrialisation in order to strengthen the industrial working class. But it was Stalin who launched both the first Five-Year Plan, with its heavy stress on industrial development, and the policy of agricultural collectivisation, which aimed both at releasing surplus labour for industry and at converting the peasant into something analagous to an industrial worker. It is true that Trotsky, as the exponent of the doctrine of 'Permanent Revolution', had been foremost in urging that the Revolution could survive in Russia only if it could be expanded into World Revolution ; whereas Stalin soon made himself the leading exponent of the idea of 'Socialism in One Country'. This at any rate was a real difference, based in Stalin's case on a clearer recognition that the prospects of early revolution in the advanced capitalist countries had disappeared, if they had ever really existed. This difference, however, though of fundamental importance for the shaping of Soviet policy after the middle 'twenties, falls far short of explaining the ferocity with which the Soviet Communist Party and the Comintern pursued everyone who could be accused of taking Trotsky's side or of acting under his influence. It became more and more apparent that the real issue was between the monolithic conception of so-called 'democratic centralism', which meant in effect the domination of the entire Communist movement from a single centre by the ruling clique of the C.P.S.U., and the rival conception of a movement acting, no doubt, under severe central discipline, but arriving at its

[1] See p. 572.

policies by way of free discussion among the party activists — free, that is to say, within the Party up to the moment when the vital decisions were actually made. This continued to be the really fundamental issue ; but it was largely hidden from view beneath the mass of other controversial issues that had to be faced, and even more beneath the weight of indiscriminate abuse with which the Stalinists belaboured their critics and befouled Trotsky's name — when they did not suppress it altogether.

While these disputes were gathering force within the Communist movement, the Centrists, as we saw, were being ground to powder between the upper and nether millstones of reformist Socialism and of revolutionary Communism. The Centre, as it existed in 1919, after the great war was over, was in a position of growing difficulty. Its main strength was in the countries in which Social Democracy had been a powerful force before the war — above all in Germany, in Austria, and in Italy. In relation to other Socialist factions it was strongest of all in Austria, no longer the capital of a multi-national empire, but a small, almost wholly German State facing prodigious economic difficulties and forbidden by its conquerors to seek a remedy in reunion with the new German Republic. On the face of the matter the most surprising fact about post-war Austria is the failure of the Communists to make any substantial breach in the unity of the Social Democratic Party. The Austrian workers, entrenched in 'Red' Vienna and a few lesser industrial strongholds, remained almost solidly faithful to the old Party and, during the first years of the Republic, were able to dominate political affairs. But as soon as there had been time for the anti-Socialists to reorganise their forces after the upsets of the Austrian Revolution, it became plain that the Socialists, however firm their control of Vienna, could not command a majority in the whole country and had to choose between coalition with their chief opponents, the Christian Socials, at the cost of giving up their hopes of turning Austria into a Socialist country, and renouncing their share in governmental power at the centre in order to preserve their independence and be able to carry on their propaganda unfettered by any alliance with the political right. Nor was this merely a choice for the moment; for the little Austria of the post-war

CHAPTER XXVIII

CONCLUSION. REFORM AND REVOLUTION

THROUGHOUT the period covered by this volume there was, both internationally and in most of the countries with which I have had to deal, a continuous debate about the issue of Revolutionism and Reformism. Neither of these words was given a consistent meaning by the disputants: nor would any attempt to classify all the Socialists under the one heading or the other make sense. Nevertheless the controversy was obviously of the greatest importance, and went again and again to the heart of the matter. There were two sharply contrasting ways of attempting to establish a Socialist society in place of capitalism, though there were also a number of possible intermediate positions into which entered both revolutionary and reformist elements.

At one extreme were those who maintained not only that Socialism was not to be got except by revolution, but also that no valuable or worth-while reforms could be got without it. 'The working class and the employing class have nothing in common', the I.W.W. proclaimed in its well-known Preamble; and there were Socialists who, taking the theory of 'increasing misery' *au pied de la lettre*, contended that everywhere in capitalist societies the workers were, and must be, getting worse off and more and more of the intermediate classes being flung down into their ranks. That, in any literal sense, this was plain nonsense and a travesty of the facts was, of course, no obstacle to some people believing it. It was, however, a considerable obstacle to inducing many people to *act* on the assumption of its truth: so that extreme militant movements which were based on accepting it were always movements of very small minorities, though occasionally for a short time they were able to draw a considerable body of dissatisfied persons in their wake.

Most of the advocates of revolution did not take this

extreme view. They held that Socialism was not to be had without revolution; but they did not deny that the material condition of the workers, or at any rate of many workers, had been improving under capitalism. Some of them held that it could be further improved, but only within restricted limits. Others argued that capitalism had already reached, or was reaching, the limits of its power to provide improvements, because it had reached, or was reaching, the zenith of its expanding power and was falling, or would speedily fall, a victim to its own 'contradictions' and be compelled to worsen working-class conditions in the course of its struggle to survive. If the limits had not yet been reached there was room for further successful day-to-day struggles to win concessions; and both the struggles and the concessions would strengthen the workers for the Revolution when the time arrived. On this view, the Revolution was not an event to be expected immediately: there was still a period of preparation ahead, during which more converts could be made and the proletariat stiffened for its coming task. But — for we are now speaking only of the believers in revolution — at the close of this period the Socialist society would be still to win, and would have to be won by revolution. There was no way by which capitalism could be transformed into Socialism by a mere accumulation of piecemeal reforms. Nor was there any way by which capitalism itself could become stabilised, or solve the riddle of perpetual progress, so as to avoid its necessary doom. This was, on the whole, the orthodox German view — the view of Wilhelm Liebknecht, of Bebel, and of Kautsky — echoed by a host of Social Democratic voices in many of the advanced capitalist countries.

If, on the other hand, capitalism had already reached, or had almost reached, the limits of its advance and therewith of its power to make concessions; if it was already facing increasing 'contradictions', or was on the point of having to face them; then the Revolution had to be looked on as an event much nearer at hand, and, in as far as it was at all worth fighting for further concessions under capitalism, the value lay rather in the fight than in the concessions themselves, which could not be retained in face of the coming capitalist decline. On this view, 'increasing misery' was either already beginning, or was

just round the corner, and would become a means of converting the workers to revolutionary policies; and the supremely important task for Socialists was that of preparing the workers to wage the Revolution well and boldly when the time came, as it soon would. This was, on the whole, the view of the Social Democrats who stood to the left of the official majority in the German Social Democratic Party — of Parvus and Rosa Luxemburg — and also of a considerable part of the Syndicalist and industrialist left wing in France and in other countries affected by the French influence.

Among those who believed that capitalism would speedily collapse on account of its contradictions there was no agreement about the forces that would actually precipitate this world event. Some put the main emphasis on impending economic crises of increasing severity, leading to mass-unemployment and pauperisation, and reiterated Marx's prophecies to this effect. Others, such as Rosa Luxemburg, put the stress on the rapidly developing imperialist rivalries between the great capitalist powers and expected the signal for the Revolution to be given by wars in which they would destroy one another and bring the system down about their ears. These explanations were, of course, not necessarily inconsistent, and they were often combined, or used indiscriminately as occasion served. As international crisis deepened during the ten years or so before 1914, more and more weight was given to the explanation in terms of imperialist rivalries, and the other argument, with the stress often given in it to under-consumption as the final source of capitalist-crisis, dropped rather into the background, except in text-books of Marxism, in which it kept its familiar place.

It was, at all events, part of the established orthodoxy that, sooner or later, capitalism was doomed and Socialism destined to take its place, and that the main agency in establishing Socialism on the ruins of capitalism was to be the proletariat — the working class acting as a class in fulfilment of its historic mission.

The various groups I have been speaking of so far, all believed that the establishment of Socialism involved revolution. But what did they mean when they used the word? They could have meant several different things; and quite

often it was not clear, either to others or to themselves, precisely what they did mean. They could have meant — and some of them did mean — only that the establishment of Socialism would *be* a Revolution, irrespective of the means by which it was won. Just as the establishment of capitalism on the ruins of feudalism had *been* a Revolution, even though nobody could assign to it a precise date or identify it more than partially with a single event, so would the victory of Socialism over capitalism *be* a Revolution, however it might come about. On this basis even a strict Reformist could be at the same time a Revolutionist; for if Socialism *is* Revolution, every Socialist is entitled to be so called. But not many who called themselves Revolutionists would have been content to have the question considered on the basis of this definition. Most of them, when they declared that Socialism involved Revolution, had in mind that it could not come without, at some point, a sharp break with the established order and the conscious refoundation of society on a new basis, involving a new set of values and a drastic change in the class system.

Most of them believed there would have to be, at some point, a sharp break with the old order and therewith a shift in the basis of power; and this break and shift were what they thought of as constituting the Revolution. Did this mean that they envisaged the Revolution in terms of fighting and killing, with the old order resisting in arms, the armed forces, or enough of them, changing sides or refusing to shoot, the enemies of the working class being shot down or disarmed and disciplined, the streets running with blood, and so on? Not necessarily, though nearly all Revolutionists, except the Tolstoyans, envisaged the Revolution as involving some element of physical violence. The amount and the degree of violence might be great or small: that would all depend. Moreover, whereas some of the Revolutionists *liked*, or even gloried in, the thought of violence and of the 'Bloody Revolution', others disliked it more or less intensely, and regarded violence as an unwelcome necessity, to be kept down to the lowest point consistent with the Revolution's success.

This was a temperamental difference of the highest importance, and of course most Revolutionists were at neither extreme. Many who would have shrunk from personal violence

unless they had been stimulated by mass excitement, did not shrink from using language which was meant to excite violent feelings, or from letting themselves go with violent thoughts and expressions when their tempers were roused. Especially in the more phlegmatic countries and where the police were not the natural enemies of the people, the Revolutionist's bark was often a good deal worse than his bite. Readiness to resort to violent behaviour was usually greatest either in backward countries or in frontier areas, such as the western mining districts of the United States or the mining areas of South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Chile, or where racial as well as economic differences were involved.

The temperamental difference was, above all, between those who had a tendency to think in terms of catastrophe and those who had not. Revolutionism is always more dramatic than Reformism; and some like drama, while others are repelled by it, at any rate when it threatens to affect their own lives. In the more advanced countries the Revolutionist is usually something of a romantic: in the backward countries he may not be — he may be a man infuriated by tyranny or oppression, or desiring vengeance, and going coolly and rationally about his self-chosen task.

It is, of course, in the less advanced countries that 'the Revolution' most often means to those who espouse it 'the Bloody Revolution'; for there is usually much less chance of accomplishing any sort of revolution without the letting of blood. In Russia, in the Balkans, and in most parts of Latin America 'the Revolution' could hardly be thought of except in connection with letting off guns, executing enemies, and generally coercing people by making them fear for their lives. The actual amount of blood shed might or might not need to be great; but it was certain that the old order would offer forcible resistance to the new as long as it could, and that the Revolutionists would need to be prepared to use force if they were to stand a chance. Even Gandhi was able to entertain the idea of successful non-violent revolution in India only because his revolution was directed against an alien rule that *might* give way rather than start shooting, and not towards the victory of one class of his own people over another. In countries that are ruled by an indigenous governing class and have no tradition of

democracy the ruling class does not get off the backs of the people without being pushed — and pushed hard. In such countries it is barely possible to be a Socialist without being a forcible Revolutionist as well. Czardom had left no other way open. True, Russia had its 'legal Marxists' of the type of Peter Struve, but even they did not rule out the use of force. Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Left and Right Social Revolutionaries were not divided on the question of the need for revolution, but only about the best means of working for it.

On the other hand, in the more advanced countries and especially where there was some experience and tradition of bourgeois democracy and constitutional government, 'the Revolution' did not necessarily mean blood. It was possible to envisage it as coming in a bloodless or almost bloodless fashion, something like the following: (*a*) the building up of a body of mass-support behind a parliamentary party; (*b*) the winning of a parliamentary majority by that party; (*c*) the voting in the Popular Chamber of a measure proclaiming a new Constitution, or summoning a Constituent Assembly to make one; (*d*) the rejection of this measure by the Upper Chamber and by the Crown or the executive authority; (*e*) the presentation by the Popular Chamber of an ultimatum to these resistant powers, backed perhaps by the threat of a general strike, or even of insurrection; (*f*) the surrender of the ruling classes in face of this ultimatum because they realised that the popular movement was too strong for them to resist; and (*g*) the meeting of a Constituent Assembly to pass a new set of basic laws which would destroy the old order and lay the foundations of a Socialist society.

This, surely, was how, in their more optimistic moments, most of the leading German Social Democrats, and indeed most of the leaders of the Second International in Western continental Europe, where they proclaimed themselves Revolutionists, did think of the Revolution. They did not exclude the possibility that the governing classes would offer some resistance when they delivered their ultimatum; but they hoped it would not go to the length of shooting, or at any rate of much shooting, and they greatly hoped that a large part of the armed forces would refuse to shoot their fellow-workers down. At all events, they envisaged the first five of the above stages as the necessary stages

of preparation for the Revolution, and hoped that the sixth and seventh stages would follow. That was what Liebknecht and Bebel and Kautsky thought, and made the basis of their action after the repeal of the Anti-Socialist Laws. That was what Jules Guesde and his followers thought in France. That was, in effect, what the majority of the self-styled Revolutionary Socialists in all the Western continental Social Democratic parties wanted to think, and made the basis of the policies they set out to pursue. They were democrats as well as Socialists: they felt that they had no *right* to make the Revolution without the backing, or at least the assent, of a majority of the people. They thought of the proletariat as being, or as in process of becoming, the majority of the people; and they envisaged the mass-conversion of the proletariat to the Socialist cause as a necessary preliminary to the Revolution.

At least, this is how they envisaged the Revolution if it came about without the complicating factor of international war; and one element in their hostility to war was the sense that, if a great war did occur, it was not easy to see the Revolution coming about in quite that orderly way, with a Socialist conquest of a parliamentary majority in each separate country preparing the way for it. The debates at the International about the course to be pursued by Socialists in face of the imminence, or of the actual outbreak, of war brought out very clearly the extent to which the Germans in particular were scared of anything that required an unparliamentary approach to the making of the Socialist society. They hated the thought of the Socialists resorting to any sort of force until force had already been used to bar their way; and they hated the general strike against war, not only because they correctly regarded it as impracticable, at any rate in Germany, but also because they saw that it could not possibly succeed without turning into positive insurrection. They preferred to put such inconvenient issues aside, and to go on relying on what they knew they were good at — the organisation of a mass-party and the widening of electoral support, without asking themselves, as the extreme Left was continually asking, whether their mass-party and their millions of voters would really stand up to fighting if, when they presented their ultimatum, the ruling classes fought back instead of surrendering, dispersed their Parliament by force, seized their buildings

and their funds, disbanded their organisations, gaoled or killed their leaders, and in general behaved as thwarted ruling classes have usually behaved in the past.

In the hope of making such conduct less likely, they espoused with zeal the idea of a citizen army to replace the standing army, though there was not the smallest chance of their getting such a thing until after the Revolution had won the day. In the same hope, they took over all the projects of bourgeois pacifism — universal arbitration, agreed disarmament, and the rest. The Revolution *had* to come by parliamentary, democratic methods, or at all events these methods had to be used up to stage five, and it was inexpedient to consider any others.

It was hardly possible for any Russian to think like that. For the Russians the Revolution was not the last stage in a process that began with a number of constitutional stages, but the necessary first stage for setting the whole process going. The Russians had to begin, or thought they had, by winning a Constitution which they knew they could not win except by revolutionary means. But the Russian Social Democrats, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks alike, knew, or thought they knew, that they were not ready to make a *Socialist* Revolution; so they resorted to the idea that the coming Russian Revolution would be not Socialist, but *bourgeois* — a belated French Revolution in a backward country not yet industrialised enough to leap straight to Socialism. There were several varieties of this attitude. On the extreme right were those who envisaged the Socialists co-operating closely with the Liberals in making the Revolution, and then either taking a subordinate place in a bourgeois revolutionary Government or supporting such a Government from outside over a period long enough to carry industrialisation to the requisite point for the Socialists to take power by the same democratic process as the Germans had in mind. In the centre was the main body of the Mensheviks, who held that the Socialists should help the Liberals to get power and to keep it, but should on no account contaminate themselves by entering into coalition with them. Among the Mensheviks there were varying views about the probable duration of this phase of bourgeois constitutionalism; for some believed that the Socialists could so act from outside the Government as to

speed up industrialisation and to shape it towards a rapid increase of proletarian power; whereas others envisaged, like the right wing, a long period of bourgeois rule. Finally, on the left were the Bolsheviks, whom Lenin persuaded to the view that the Socialist Revolution could be made to follow swiftly on the heels of its bourgeois predecessor, and that Socialists should not shrink from entering a bourgeois coalition in order to prevent the Liberals from 'ratting' on the bourgeois Revolution before it had been carried through to victory, but should stand ready, the moment they felt strong enough, to stab their bourgeois allies in the back — and if necessary the Mensheviks too — and make the Socialist Revolution without waiting for the country to have been industrialised, or for the proletariat to have become anything like a majority of the people.

Lenin's conception of the two Revolutions necessarily raised, as a crucial question, the place of the peasants in both. Of course, all the Revolutionists wanted to win the peasants over to support of the Revolution at every stage. That was not the point at issue. The question was whether the peasants were to be regarded as potential partners of the urban proletariat in the making of the new order, or as mere instruments whose miseries and discontents could be exploited to strengthen the Revolution — *either* Revolution — or as something betwixt and between. After 1905, at any rate, it was clear that peasant uprisings would have to play a most important part in the first, bourgeois Revolution, and that the Socialists could by no means afford to ignore them in making their preparations. It was also obvious, at any rate after Stolypin's agrarian reforms, that the peasants would not *solidly* support anything more than a bourgeois Revolution, and that many of the better-off peasants — the *kulaks* — would be positively hostile to the Socialist Revolution when the time for it arrived. Accordingly, Lenin had to consider very seriously not only the peasants as a whole, but also the class divisions among them, and to draw distinctions between quasi-proletarian peasants and quasi-bourgeois peasants, and lay plans in terms of dividing the village against itself, if not in the first Revolution, at any rate well in advance of the second. Indeed, this process would have to be begun even before the first Revolution; for it would be the poorer peasants who would bring about the uprisings in the villages that were a

necessary part of the machinery for overthrowing Czarism.

The peasants were, moreover, of crucial importance because they made up the main part of the army, and it was necessary to induce as many as possible of them to refuse to obey orders to shoot the revolutionaries down. All this meant that the Socialists must offer the peasants something they could clearly understand as promising them — all except the best-off — a concrete and immediate gain. The thing to offer was obviously land. The trouble was that what the peasants wanted was land they could cultivate for themselves in small patches, and feel sure of keeping; whereas the Social Democrats believed not only in land nationalisation but also in large-scale cultivation and in the industrialisation of the countryside. 'Never mind', said Lenin, 'the Revolution is what matters. If, in order to win the peasants for the Revolution, they must be given the land to occupy as they wish, we must give it them, or rather we must promise it them, and tell them to occupy it for themselves without waiting to be given it. Nationalisation and industrialised agriculture can wait. The immediate task is to win the first Revolution with the peasants' help.'

'That is all very well', said Lenin's critics. 'But, if the peasants once get the land, will they ever give it up? Will they not in fact, having got the land, become the most determined opponents of the second, Socialist Revolution?' 'We must risk that', said Lenin. 'Our task is to make the first Revolution; and for that we must have all the allies we can find. We will face the further question when we have won the first round.' 'But it is against our principles to set up a backward, reactionary peasant régime', said the critics. 'Look what happened in France after 1789. The peasants are the great majority: how shall we be able to achieve the Socialist Revolution democratically if we have the peasants against us?' At which Lenin perhaps winked.

There was no doubt in the minds of the Russian Social Democrats, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks alike, that the leadership of the Socialist Revolution would have to rest with the industrial workers, even if they succeeded in making the main body of the peasants their allies. They did not believe the peasants to be capable of leading or guiding the Revolution at any stage. In the first, bourgeois, Revolution it was of vital

importance to the Social Democrats — and especially to the Bolsheviks — to rally the peasants behind them as far as possible in order to prevent them from becoming, under *kulak* leadership, part of the bourgeois bloc. As the *kulaks* were certain to make common cause with the bourgeois parties, this meant trying to wrest the village leadership from them by organising the mass of poor peasants under proletarian influence and setting them to redistribute the land without waiting for State commissioners or for anybody else to come and do it with legal authority. Such a proposal shocked many Mensheviks, who wanted everything to be done in due order, and held that the peasants should be told to wait till the Constituent Assembly had passed a new land law. But a much greater obstacle in the way of Lenin's policy was that the Social Revolutionaries had a much greater peasant following than the Social Democrats; and it was a question whether the correct policy was to make allies of them or to set out at once on an attempt to destroy their influence. The immediate answer was clear. In the first Revolution, at any rate, it was necessary for the Social Democrats to work with the S.R.s, and therefore, while doing all they could to strengthen their own position in the villages, to come to terms with them about encouraging the peasants to seize the land at once.

This was easy; for the S.R.s *wanted* the peasants to have the land, and were not, like the Bolsheviks, urging them to seize it only reluctantly, and for tactical reasons. There was a right wing of the S.R.s that wanted to work in with the liberal landowners and the progressive Zemstvos, and was opposed to stirring up the poorer elements in the villages against the more prosperous peasants. This group, for the most part, favoured peasant Co-operation — marketing and purchasing societies, credit societies, societies for sharing implements, and so on — and Agricultural Co-operation appealed mainly to the peasants who were better off. But the main body of the S.R.s consisted of advocates of peasant revolution, who believed that the old village community could be brought back to life in a changed form and that Russia could be transformed into an agrarian Socialist society without passing through the phase of capitalism. This type of S.R. was strongly in favour of the peasants seizing the land. His difference from

the Social Democrats was that he did not, like them, want to help the bourgeois Revolution to succeed first, and only then to go on to make the Socialist Revolution. For him there was only one Revolution, and he wanted to make it at once and relied on the peasants to do most of the making by spontaneous uprisings all over the country.

The S.R.s were strong among the national minorities of the Russian Empire — in the Ukraine and the Caucasus, among the Moslems of Asia, and generally in the outlying areas. It was necessary to come to terms with them ; but this meant that the Social Democrats and the Social Revolutionaries would be working together in order to make not one and the same Revolution, but two different Revolutions. That was why, both in 1905 and in 1917, real co-operation was so difficult. The Revolution, whatever its nature, had to capture the countryside as well as the towns. In the countryside it was bound to result, if it succeeded, in the setting up of a number of regional Governments, some of which would represent national groups revolting against Russian imperial rule, and most of which would be inspired by the idea of a predominantly agrarian Socialism and would be much more concerned with their local affairs than with those of Russia as a whole. At the centre, on the other hand, the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks would be working together to put the liberal bourgeoisie into power, and would need the support of the S.R.s for doing this. But most of the S.R.s hated the liberal bourgeoisie, and did not at all want to put it into power. They were, however, less divided from Lenin than from the Mensheviks, because Lenin envisaged the second Revolution as following rapidly upon the first, hated the bourgeoisie as much as they did, and made no secret of his intention of stabbing them in the back as soon as they had done what was required of them in overthrowing the Czarist autocracy. Lenin, therefore, could work with the S.R.s, in the earlier phase of the Revolution, more easily than the Mensheviks, and indeed than many of his Bolshevik colleagues.

For Lenin did believe that the peasants could play a vital part in the Revolution, whereas there were others besides Trotsky who feared that, if they were allowed their head, they would wreck the Revolution's chances and merely break up the Russian Empire into a number of backward peasant States

which would become bulwarks of oriental barbarism.

I have discussed the problem of the peasants' part in the Revolution entirely in Russian terms; but it was of course by no means exclusively a Russian problem, or even a problem of the predominantly peasant countries. Every Socialist Party had to take account of it, and it assumed widely differing forms from country to country. In Rumania and in Hungary it was fairly like the Russian problem, except for the existence in Hungary of very large bodies of landless labourers: in Bulgaria and in some other parts of the Balkans it was essentially different, because there was no considerable class of great landowners to excite the peasants' hate. In Austria, as in Russia, it was tangled up with the problem of autonomist movements of national minorities; in Germany it was one thing in the south and quite another in the east, with large bodies of relatively prosperous peasants in Bavaria, Baden, and the Rhineland, for example, and great masses of impoverished landless workers on the great estates of the east. In France, too, there were wide regional differences, for example between vine-growing and arable areas; but on the whole the French had to face a large class of relatively well-to-do peasant owners who owed their lands to the great Revolution, and wished to conserve the Revolution rather than to carry it further. Spain was a land of sharp contrasts between a few fertile areas cultivated by relatively prosperous peasants, other areas where very poor peasants were grossly overcrowded on minute holdings, and yet other areas where vast estates lay largely uncultivated and a great landless mass of peasants existed precariously at the landowners' mercy. Italy had similar contrasts between the southern areas of the great *latifundia* and the north; but in the north and centre also there were districts, such as Emilia, of large estates and large, landless wage-earning populations. Each country had its own peasant problem to face, and in each the Socialists had to attempt to formulate an agrarian policy — and found great difficulty in doing so.

The peasant problem was by no means the only one that presented difficulties to the Russian Social Democrats in deciding on the kind of Revolution they meant to make. For the Mensheviks, as we observed, there were two Revolutions, to be separated by a considerable interval during which

industrialisation would go on under bourgeois government until the time was ripe for the Socialists to seize power. Then only would come the Socialist Revolution. But what sort of Revolution would this second Revolution be? I think most of the Mensheviks envisaged it much as most German Social Democrats thought of their Revolution — that is to say, in terms of the stages described on page 946, and not in terms of the violence of which they had to recognise the necessity in the first Revolution. The Mensheviks were Westernisers, and great admirers of German Social Democracy: they looked to the first Revolution to assimilate Russia to the West, so as to allow the second Revolution to be accomplished in the Western way. Lenin, on the other hand, though he too admired the German Social Democrats — whom up to 1914 at least he quite misunderstood — thought of the second even more than of the first Revolution in terms of a violent seizure of power by a minority. Lenin was not at all prepared to wait indefinitely while Russia became industrialised under bourgeois control before launching the second Revolution. At first, it was by no means clear what his criteria were for assessing the point at which the Socialist Revolution would become possible in Russia; but presently he arrived at the essentially new idea that, although Russia would have to become a developed industrial country in order to become ripe for Socialism and would therefore have to pass through a capitalist stage, there was no necessity for this stage to be passed through under capitalist government. Lenin conceived the notion of 'State Capitalism' — that is, of the practice of capitalistic methods and techniques by a Communist Government, which would exercise a workers' dictatorship, but would hold back from introducing actual Communism until the conditions for it had been made ready under a 'State Capitalist' régime.

This made it possible to advance the date of the Socialist, or Communist, Revolution so that it could speedily follow the bourgeois Revolution. For, on this view, the function of the bourgeois Revolution, in the economic field, became entirely negative. It had only to clear Czarism and autocracy out of the way, leaving the Communists, when it had done this, free to overthrow it and take power at once. Lenin's two Revolutions, then, were to be both quickly over, and were to be followed by

a long process of industrialisation under Communist control. This long phase of transition was sometimes spoken of as 'Socialism' in distinction from the 'Communism' which would in due course follow it — the distinction resting on certain passages in Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* dealing with the abolition of unearned income but not of earned income differences during the period of transition.

This brings us to the distinctive view of the nature of the Revolution formulated by Leon Trotsky, who was neither a Bolshevik nor a Menshevik, nor something betwixt and between, but an essentially independent thinker. Trotsky's view, partly formulated before the 1905 Revolution, but much more clearly and fully restated in the light of his experiences in 1905, has two main aspects — internal and international. Internally, he did not, like Lenin, draw a sharp distinction between two Revolutions: indeed, he rolled the two into one. He insisted that the Liberal bourgeoisie of Russia had neither the guts nor the strength to make any real Revolution, and that the proletariat would need, not to help them into power, but itself to assume the leading part and to carry through the Revolution on its own account. Taking a poor view of the peasants as allies, he had to put almost the entire emphasis on the industrial workers, few though they were, to stress the intensely modern character of what large-scale industry Russia possessed, and to attach great weight to the Soviets of the urban workers as the creative forces of the Revolution. Trotsky looked to the Soviets to take over the administration of the towns and of the areas round them, and in collaboration to constitute themselves the Government of the new Socialist society. He, like the rest of the Social Democrats, regarded rapid industrialisation as essential to the establishment of a Socialist society; and his view implied that this process would have to be carried through under Socialist, and not under bourgeois, control. Indeed, his hostility to the peasantry caused him to go further than Lenin in this respect, and to insist that the victorious Revolution must not only industrialise at top speed, under Socialist control, but must also make haste to socialise agriculture as well as industry, and to apply industrial methods to land cultivation, in order to convert the reactionary peasant as speedily as possible into a modern man.

This was the internal aspect of Trotsky's doctrine. Its international aspect was of even greater importance. The name given to Trotsky's views on this matter is the rather misleading one of 'the Permanent Revolution', and he is often said to have borrowed it from the Russo-German Socialist, A. L. Helphand (1869–1924), better known by his pen-name, Parvus. Parvus had settled in Germany, and had become a leading writer on the German Left, contributing regularly to the *Neue Zeit* and to other German Socialist journals and also to *Iskra* and other Russian periodicals. Parvus had kept out of the controversy between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, and had tried, like Trotsky, to play the part of conciliator. But his views had much more in common with Bolshevism than with Menshevism. In 1904 Trotsky, having quarrelled with the Mensheviks as well as with the Bolsheviks, joined Parvus in Munich, and for some time lived and worked in close collaboration with him. This was at the time of the outbreak of the war between Russia and Japan; and this event was the text for a series of articles on 'War and Revolution' which Parvus published in *Iskra* in 1904. Parvus looked on the Russo-Japanese War as the first of a series of imperialist wars between the great Nation-States. Marx in 1848 had announced the impending downfall of the Nation-State and had proclaimed the essential internationalism of the workers' Revolution; but during the second half of the nineteenth century the Nation-State, instead of disappearing, had steadily increased its strength and had turned, wherever it was powerful enough, into the centre of an imperialist State system. Moreover, submerged nationalities had increasingly asserted their claim to have Nation-States of their own; and Socialism, while rebutting Nationalism as a creed, had become to some extent its ally where it was asserting the claims of an enslaved or subjugated people. The Socialists in Austria-Hungary, and in the Russian Empire particularly, had been wrestling rather unhappily with the national problem, torn between their sympathy for the cause of national self-determination and their desire not to see the working-class struggle broken up on national lines; and no satisfactory solution of the problem had been reached.[1]

Parvus now entered the field by arguing that the develop-

[1] See Chapter XII.

ment of capitalism and colonialism had made the world into a vast arena of commercial and imperial rivalries, so that not only between countries but also between continents there was so much interdependence that the Nation-State, even in its expanded imperialist form, was becoming wholly obsolete. This growth of interdependence, however, was leading, not to cultural or economic unification, but to an increasing clash between the rival States, which was bound to result in mutually destructive wars. The Russo-Japanese War, said Parvus, was a war, not so much for Korea or Manchuria, as for hegemony in Eastern Asia. It would be followed by similar struggles in other parts of the world. What happened to Russia in Asia would affect Russia's fortunes in Europe. Russia's economic backwardness had already caused it to fall under the control of French finance. The internal strains set up by the attempt to play the great imperialist power despite the weakness of the economic and social structure would lead to revolution in Russia. 'The Russian Revolution will shake the bourgeois world . . . and the Russian proletariat may well play the rôle of vanguard of the social revolution.' This, it must be borne in mind, was written in 1904.

Thus Parvus was already thinking in terms of World Revolution, rather than of separate national Revolutions, and was suggesting that the Russians might become the leaders in the World Revolution, not in spite of Russia's backwardness, but because of it.

Trotsky was undoubtedly much influenced by these ideas. Towards the end of 1904, when revolution in Russia seemed to be already well on the way, he was at work on a pamphlet in which he was attempting to define the course it should follow. He finished this pamphlet immediately after the massacre of Father Gapon's demonstrators at St. Petersburg in January 1905, which is commonly regarded as the actual beginning of the Revolution; and he called it *The Period up to the Ninth of January* — the date of the massacre. Trotsky's pamphlet was mainly a violent attack on the Liberals for their vacillations and their lack of clearly defined objectives, and an insistence that there would be no Revolution unless the industrial proletariat assumed the leadership of it. He envisaged the Revolution as beginning with a general strike that would get the working

class out on the streets, occupying the towns, seizing key buildings, and constituting their own revolutionary administration. The towns, he said, would be the main centres of revolutionary activity; but they could not make the Revolution alone. The peasants, too, must be brought in as a 'source of revolutionary energy': the agitation must be carried immediately into the countryside as well. Propaganda must be carried into the mainly peasant army, so that the soldiers, who had no lack of grievances of their own, would refuse to shoot the demonstrators. 'We must develop the most intense agitation among the soldiers so that at the moment of the strike every soldier who is sent to suppress the "rebels" will know that what faces him is the people demanding the summoning of a Constituent Assembly.'

Parvus wrote a preface to Trotsky's pamphlet, in which he stated, much more unequivocally than Trotsky had done, the case for the single Revolution. 'The Revolutionary Provisional Government of Russia', he wrote, 'will be the Government of a workers' democracy. . . . As the Social Democratic Party is at the head of the revolutionary movement . . . this Government will be Social Democratic.' It was to be a 'coherent Government with a Social Democratic majority' — not a Government composed of, or dominated by, the bourgeoisie. This conclusion was acceptable to neither Mensheviks nor Bolsheviks. The Mensheviks insisted that, as the Revolution would necessarily be bourgeois in nature, the bourgeoisie should be left to control it, with the Socialists in opposition. Lenin insisted that Parvus's conception was impossibilist, because such a revolutionary dictatorship of the workers could have no stability unless it were based on a great majority of the people, whereas the Russian proletariat was only a minority. Accordingly, the Revolutionary Government would have to be set up by a coalition, in which the petty bourgeois and half-proletarian elements would have to take part, or even predominate. 'It would be most damaging', said Lenin, 'to entertain any illusions at all about this matter.'

Probably neither Trotsky nor Parvus was at this stage clear how far these doctrines carried them. Neither had explicitly challenged the view that the function of the Revolution — of what Lenin would have called the 'first Revolution'

— would be mainly destructive, and that Socialism would be still to build after its success. But Trotsky insisted that the brunt of the revolutionary struggle was bound to fall on the industrial proletariat and that this would force it to take power whether it would or no. He went on to say that it was inconceivable that the proletariat, having once taken power, would voluntarily give it up — which amounted to saying that they would retain it and use it to make the Socialist Revolution.

There the matter stood while the Revolution of 1905 was going through its phases, with Trotsky at the head of the St. Petersburg Soviet. But the Revolution failed, and Trotsky was arrested. In prison he had leisure to reflect upon it, and to reformulate his ideas about the successful Revolution that was still to come. The results of his reflections appeared partly in the History of the St. Petersburg Soviet which he edited. He there proclaimed that next time there would be Soviets in all the towns all over the country, taking governmental power into their hands, and Peasant Soviets in the countryside, to carry through the rural revolution. 'It is easier', he wrote, 'to formulate such a plan than to carry it out. But if victory is destined for the Revolution, the proletariat cannot but assume this rôle.'

The main part of Trotsky's doctrine was embodied in an essay, 'The Balance and the Prospects', which was published as the final section of his book, *Our Revolution*. It was written in 1906, but the book did not circulate widely, and the essay was not well known until after 1917. In it Trotsky argued that the industrial proletariat, having borne the burden of the Revolution, would be forced to carry it on to Socialism, even in the absence of a Socialist Revolution in Western Europe. He contended that the weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie, which unfitted it for revolutionary leadership, was due to the fact that in Russia the State had subordinated everything to itself, so that capitalism had developed, not as an independent force, but as the State's servant. The Russian towns had been centres, not of production, but of consumption. Industrial crafts had developed mainly, not in the towns, but scattered over the villages. There was, accordingly, in the towns, neither a large productive bourgeois class nor a large number of skilled artisans. What modern industry they contained was chiefly in

the hands of foreigners: it therefore generated a proletariat, but not a native middle class. But the proletariat it created was highly concentrated, and well capable of strong organisation. These facts dictated the pattern of revolution in Russia.

Trotsky then went on to consider the Revolution internationally. There had been three outstanding revolutionary dates — 1789, 1848, and 1905. In 1789 the French bourgeoisie had masterfully led the way, and there had been no coherent proletarian movement. In 1848 in the key-centre, Germany, the bourgeoisie had lacked the courage and self-confidence to carry through the Revolution; and the working class, though already strong enough to scare the bourgeoisie, was not yet strong enough to assume the leadership. In 1905, in Russia, the workers had taken the lead, in face of a still feeble bourgeoisie; and though they were being beaten back, it would not be long before they carried the Revolution through to victory.

Against those who spoke of the immaturity of Russia for Socialist Revolution, Trotsky said: 'In an economically backward country the proletariat can take power sooner than in countries where capitalism is more advanced'. He wanted the industrial workers, minority though they were, to seize governmental power, to draw the peasants into the Revolution under their leadership, and to establish a dictatorship in which they would be given a subordinate share. 'The proletariat', he said, 'will appear before the peasantry as its liberator'; and the peasants, having been encouraged and helped to seize the landlords' estates, would accept the proletariat as their leader. Thus the proletarian minority would gain majority support for its dictatorship. Thus Trotsky, in 1906, was in advance even of Lenin in favouring the seizure of the land by the peasants. At that time only Stalin, among the leaders of Bolshevism, took the same line. Both men saw, as Lenin was soon to see, that this was the only way in which the Revolution could triumph in the countryside and so make possible its durable victory in the towns. But Trotsky's insistence on this did not make him believe that the peasants could become a truly creative force in the Socialist Revolution. He thought that only the proletariat could be that. He expected a sharp conflict with the peasantry to follow the success of the Revolution; and he believed that the peasants would at that stage defeat the Socialist Revolution

unless it had become international. 'Without the direct governmental support of the European proletariat, the working class of Russia will not be able to maintain itself in power and transform its temporary rule into a stable and durable Socialist dictatorship.'

This is, of course, the crux of Trotsky's doctrine. He was arguing that the Russian Revolution, which he held must be a Socialist Revolution, could not last unless it gave the signal for World Revolution and became, in his own words, 'the initiator of the liquidation of capitalism on a world-wide scale'. Trotsky then went on to say that fear of the proletariat would induce the European bourgeoisie to make frantic efforts to avoid internecine war, because 'European war inevitably means European revolution', but that they would necessarily fail because nothing could get rid of the mutual antagonisms of the great powers, or prevent them from issuing in armed conflict.

Trotsky, then, shared Rosa Luxemburg's view that capitalism was more likely to be brought down by internecine war than by its inherent economic contradictions resulting in the exhaustion of its expansive capacity. But the essential part of his argument turned, not directly on this point, but on his anticipation of what would be the course of a renewed, initially successful Russian Revolution. He was convinced that this would come soon; but he was also convinced that, as soon as the proletariat tried to make it Socialist, the peasants would turn against it and, aided by forces of reaction from outside Russia, would be able to destroy it unless the proletariat of the more advanced countries came to its defence. 'Left to itself, the Russian working class will inevitably be crushed by the counter-revolution at the moment when the peasantry turns its back on the proletariat. Nothing will remain for the workers but to link the fate of their own political rule, and consequently the fate of the whole Russian Revolution, with that of the Socialist Revolution in Europe.' As Trotsky put the case, it was not only that the workers of Europe would save the Russian Revolution, but also that the Russian workers would throw their great power and energy 'into the scales of the class-struggle of the entire capitalist world'. The Russian Revolution would thus turn into a World Revolution, in which Russian and Western Socialists would fight side by side.

Trotsky's doctrine of Permanent Revolution did not, at the time, attract much attention. At a later stage, the view that Socialist Revolution in Russia could not hope to maintain itself without the help of revolution in the West came to be practically an agreed tenet of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks alike; but in 1906 hardly anyone except Trotsky had discussed it, though, of course, much had been said about the probability of war precipitating World Revolution, and such leftists as Rosa Luxemburg had already been insisting on the need to give the revolutionary movement an international character and to think in terms not of a series of national revolutions but of a World Revolution on a class-basis, transcending national frontiers. The World Revolution was already a familiar idea; and it was usually thought of in terms of actual fighting, and as most probably coming about as a consequence of international war. The idea was, however, in the main the property of the extreme Left. Save when they were explaining that they did not wish war to break out even though it might help to precipitate World Revolution, most of the Western leaders said practically nothing about it.

So far, in this chapter, we have been considering only the opinions of those Socialists who regarded themselves as Revolutionists, in the sense that they held that some sort of revolution would be necessary for bringing the Socialist society to birth. We have now to review the position of the Socialists who rejected this view, and either described themselves as 'Reformists', or did not repudiate the label when it was fastened upon them. Among these were the German Revisionists and Reformists, headed by Bernstein and Vollmar, the British Fabians and most of the British I.L.P. and Labour Party, most of the Scandinavians, the main part of the American Socialist Party (but not, of course, the Socialist Labour Party or the I.W.W.), the Swiss, a section of the Italians, the bulk of the Australian Labour Parties and a part of the New Zealand Party, the French Millerandists (but not Jaurès or the main body of French Socialists), and, perhaps, the Russian 'Legal' Marxists. The French moderates, except Millerand and his like, cannot be put into this category because the words, 'la Révolution', had for them a special reference to the great French Revolution of 1789, which they regarded it as their mission to preserve and

to complement by achieving 'la révolution sociale'. They had their own doctrine, derived from Proudhon, of the 'permanent' or immanent revolution; but in many respects they agreed with those who in other countries accepted the Reformist label.

The Reformist doctrine, as stated, for example, by Sidney Webb in *Fabian Essays*, rested on an alternative version of Marx's Conception of History. The Reformists saw the powers of production being continually advanced by scientific and technological discovery, and saw these advances bringing about changes in the structure of society. Like Marx they descried in social development a continuing tendency towards the 'socialisation' of the processes of production, which destroyed the identity of the product of the individual worker and converted him into a mere contributor to a social process of production. This 'socialisation' also took the form of increasing scale of production, increasing integration between factory and factory, industry and industry, market and market. They expected it to go on further and further, with increasing concentration of control in the hands of great trusts and combines, till presently these were taken over and made public property, to be administered for the common benefit. So far, they agreed with Marx; but they differed from him in believing that, as production increased, the workers would be able to improve their conditions and standards of living, partly by exacting higher real wages and partly by securing from the State, which they would democratise, an expanding system of social welfare services and a redistribution of incomes and property through taxation designed to confiscate 'rent' and appropriate it to bettering the condition of the people and to the further development of productive power.

The political side of this Reformist doctrine was that the State was not, as Marx had asserted it to be, of its very nature a class institution, existing to serve the interests of a particular class, but was to be regarded rather as of its essence neutral, as an instrument ready to be used by any class or group or collection of human beings who could get control of it. Thus, if by the establishment of electoral democracy and of responsible government the State were brought under the power of the majority of the people, it would become, said the Reformists, the instrument of that majority; and if the democratic system

were brought into being by constitutional changes, without resort to violence, the capitalist State would be turned without revolution into the People's State, and could be used for the introduction of Socialism. The Reformists did not deny that States had often been in practice the instruments of a governing class: they denied that this need be so, or that the State could be properly *defined* as an organ of class-domination. The Marxists, on the other hand, insisted that the State should be defined only in this way, and added that a State which had been the instrument of one governing class could by no means be taken over and made the instrument of a different class. The old State would have to be smashed, and a new State, corresponding to the needs of the new dominant class, would have to be put in its place.

This was, of course, in part a quarrel over words; for none denied that the State would need to change its character in order to become the instrument of a different class. But the Marxist conception implied that this change had to take place all of a sudden, with the new State suddenly replacing the old, whereas the Reformists thought in terms of a gradual transformation of State functions in which it would be impossible to point to any one moment when the State had ceased to be one thing and become another. The real issue was thus between gradualism and catastrophism rather than between alternative definitions of 'the State'.

Of course, the Reformist view implied that the existing social and economic system was neither such as to engender conditions of 'increasing misery' for the main body of the people nor destined to be laid suddenly low by its inherent 'contradictions'. The Reformist might argue that capitalism was becoming less and less suitable as a means of making the most of the available powers of production; but he usually assumed that, on the whole, the output of goods and services would go on increasing faster than the population, despite capitalist inefficiency, and that it would continue to be possible to increase welfare without causing economic breakdown. He might hold that welfare would increase very much faster as further advances towards Socialism were brought about; and he might argue that partial breakdowns would occur unless certain parts of the productive structure — for example,

railways — were brought under public operation. But he held that cracks in the existing structure could be mended by piecemeal methods — by socialisation of particular industries, by the development of protective laws and social services, and by transferring more and more of the 'surplus' in the hands of the rich into the hands of the whole community.

Thus the Reformists were on the whole optimists, and the Revolutionists pessimists, about the prospects of production and living standards without a revolution. But, whereas the Revolutionists drew a sharp distinction between 'increasing misery' under capitalism and 'increasing prosperity' under Socialist planning and construction, the Reformists recognised no such sharp distinction. Socialism was, for most of them, a matter not of an absolute, but of more or less. They thought, as Bernstein said of himself, more of the process than of the result. Socialism, in a complete sense, might never come: *more* Socialism would and could come without the need for a sharp break at any one point. Of course, many Reformists recognised that there might, in fact, be a sharp break; but instead of greeting this prospect with pleasure, as 'the glorious Revolution', they hoped to avoid its occurrence, and laid their plans on lines designed to make it less likely.

The Reformists were of many sorts and kinds. At one extreme there were philanthropists whose entire concern was with the increase of social welfare, and who concerned themselves mainly with the improvement of social legislation and with getting the rich taxed to pay for it. These shaded into the Reformists who argued that there were narrow limits to what could be achieved by these methods, unless the State also took at least the key industries into its hands and thus put itself in a position to dispense with profit-incentives in relation to them, and to remove the fetters on output which the search for private profit imposed. There were arguments between 'eleemosynary' Socialists and 'socialising' Socialists, and also about how much actual 'socialisation' was indispensable in order to provide a secure basis for Socialist economic planning — and how far 'control' could be made to do instead. Then there were out-and-out socialisers who wanted the State or the municipality to take over everything in the name of 'consumer democracy', but wanted this to come about gradually, by a

sequence of Acts of Parliament dealing with each particular industry or service, and insisted that, as a matter of equal justice, gradual socialisation involved compensation to the existing owners. Some of these added, as Shaw did, that the compensation paid must be derived entirely from taxes on the owners of property, so that they would be, in effect, compensating one another without cost to the community. Some favoured, instead of compensation, only terminable annuities to ease the transition, and some rejected compensation altogether in certain cases — for example, land — on the ground that there could be no right to private property in the gifts of nature, but only a limited right in man-made capital assets.

The dispute over compensation often occupied, especially in Great Britain, a large place in the disputes between the Left and the Right. The Left pointed out that the payment of compensation, unless it were accompanied by at least equivalent transfers of property to the public by means of taxes on capital — *e.g.* on inheritance — would reduce nationalisation to a mere change from private to public management and would carry with it no necessary diminution of private property. It would merely substitute interest payments for profits, and would leave the workers in the transferred industries subject to much the same exploitation as before. The Left ridiculed the notion that the rich could be made to pay through higher taxes on income or consumption the sums required for public purchase of industries, without rendering it impossible to tax them more heavily at the same time for the expansion of redistributive social services; and they argued that publicly administered industries, if they were required to earn interest for the former owners, would inevitably continue to be carried on in an essentially capitalistic way. The Right was not greatly troubled by these criticisms, fundamentally sound though they were; for the gradualists were mostly quite prepared to postpone expropriation of the owning classes to an undated future, provided they were allowed to advance towards nationalisation, or some variant of it, by the easiest road. As for terminable annuities, the Right argued that their adoption would make no real difference, because in equity they would have to be made high enough to represent the full value of the assets transferred; whereas the Left denied this necessity and wanted

the annuities to continue only for the time it was expected to take to make socialisation general, and to be regarded as notice to quit, given in advance to the entire class of capitalists, who would thus receive fair warning what to expect. The Right, of course, rejected this view because its adherents neither had in their minds any date for the completion of the socialising process nor even contemplated that it would be completed, or private ownership of the means of production ended, within any predictable term of years.

The Reformists were all gradualists, if they were politicians. But there were some who were not. Hertzka, for example,[1] proposed to establish in Central Africa a brand-new State set free from the toll of rent and interest on the producers, to serve as a model which presently all the States of the world would copy when it had proved its superior efficiency. It may be said that Hertzka was not a Socialist, even of a reformist kind; but he had at any rate taken over quite a number of Socialist ideas. The foundation of ideal Communities was not, for the most part, a characteristic of the period studied in this volume, except for a few groups which set out not so much to regenerate the world as to live the 'good life' away from its evils and trivialities — for example, Tolstoyans. William Lane's Paraguay experiment was an isolated instance, and not encouraging in its results; and Lane can certainly not be described as a Reformist. For the most part the Reformists were not at all disgusted with the world, or desirous of escaping from it, even if they thought much of its behaviour rather silly. They were advocates of the Welfare State who believed that, given a democratic franchise and a Government responsible to the electors, the State could be used as an instrument for the diffusion of the means to the good life.

The Reformist Socialists were, moreover, nearly all ardent political democrats. They did not consider that they had a right to establish Socialism, or to advance towards it, without a popular mandate; and they wanted to act on the mandate of a majority of the whole people, and not of a class. They disliked the idea of the class-struggle, even when they accepted it as a social fact. They were opposed to exclusive class-appeals, and utterly hostile to the notion of class-dictatorship. This word,

[1] See p. 559.

'dictatorship', was, in fact, seldom used by the Marxists, except in Russia — and not a great deal even there till Lenin got busy with it. When the Germans used it they did not as a rule mean by it any exclusive system of working-class rule, but only that, in a democratic society, the proletariat, as the most numerous class and the best organised, would actually rule the roost without any need to disfranchise or discriminate against other people. We have seen how much emphasis the Germans put on the winning of a majority under universal suffrage as a necessary pre-condition of Socialism; and we must not forget that even the Bolsheviks demanded a Constituent Assembly for which other people, equally with workers, would be entitled to vote. It may have been partly because he accepted this condition that Lenin insisted so strongly on the distinction between the two Revolutions, of which the second — the Socialist — could come only when the proletariat had become a majority, or at any rate only when the proletariat *plus* the other elements of the people it had managed to assimilate to itself had become a majority. The Reformists were even more insistent that the Socialists must march forward only in accord with what the majority would support. They took the parliamentary vote very seriously indeed, as an expression of the will of the people, and relied on winning majorities gradually for more and more advanced socialistic measures.

On this issue there were throughout our period groups which were strongly opposed to both the Revolutionists and the Reformist 'democrats'. This opposition, too, had its right and left wings: it included at one extreme the Voluntarists of the Co-operative movement, and at the other the apostles of Anarchist-Communism and of Revolutionary Syndicalism. What bound all these discordant groups together was opposition to the extension of the State's powers to cover the ordering of all the major collective activities of society, whether the State was envisaged as a dictatorship or as an open democracy. They argued that, though industrialist profit-seeking was evil, it was undesirable, in destroying it, to make the State — even the electorally democratic State — the universal master. Many of them argued that parliamentary democracy was not real democracy because the elector had no real power to control any representative whom he elected, not to do something specific,

but to exercise universal power. Some of these anti-parliamentarians wanted to do away with government altogether; but what they really meant was that, instead of concentrating authority over everything in one place, they wanted to divide it up, both functionally and locally, so as to limit it to the exercise of particular functions and in doing so make it more amenable to control by those it was supposed to represent, and at the same time so as to decentralise it and keep it near to, and in close touch with, those who were to be called upon to observe its regulations.

Thus the Co-operators for the most part looked forward to a gradual taking over of the economic work of society by voluntary associations of consumers and producers, managing their own affairs with a minimum of interference from the State. The Syndicalists, on the other hand, regarded the Trade Union as the primary organ of democracy, arguing that what a man was at his work he would tend to be in his whole way of life, and that unless he were free and self-governing as a producer, in association with his immediate fellows, socialisation would lead to a Servile State in which politicians and bureaucrats, in the name of an unreal democracy, would tyrannise over the common man. The Anarchist-Communists, with a different emphasis, wanted to put power in the hands of local communities of friends and neighbours, who would manage their affairs with a minimum of bureaucratic machinery, and would, as far as possible, act directly rather than transfer their power to representatives, as had to be done where social organisation was on a large scale. Guild Socialists, as distinct from both these schools of thought, put great emphasis on functional organisation, holding representation to be real where the representative was chosen for a definite and limited task, but unreal where he was supposed to stand in the place of the 'whole man', and to express his will in relation to everything. All these critics of parliamentary democracy were 'pluralists', except perhaps the Anarchist-Communists. They all wanted, instead of an omnicompetent State, a variety of agencies of social control, each with its own particular job to do, and none authorised to ride roughshod over the rest.

As against these pluralists and libertarians, the Social Democrats, whether of the Right or the Left, were advocates

of unitary State Sovereignty, and most of them of centralisation as well. Both Bolsheviks and parliamentary Social Democrats regarded increasing centralisation of power as an unmistakable characteristic of progress, and regarded themselves as the destined heirs of capitalist concentration and of the centralised power of the modern State. They identified the growth of 'socialisation', in the broadest Marxist sense, with the growth of scale and the accumulation of power in larger units of both production and government. On this issue the Reformists were divided; for some of them were ardent nationalisers, while others favoured municipalisation in the hope of lessening the concentration of power; and some of them looked forward, not to State Socialism so much as to a situation in which the State, while acting as the co-ordinating planner, would use a diversity of self-governing agencies for the execution of its social purposes rather than concentrate administrative authority in its own hands.

When, some pages back, I made an attempt to classify the Socialists of a number of countries in respect of their attitudes to Revolution and Reform, there were certain countries which I deliberately left out of the analysis. Among these were, in particular, Austria and Belgium. I left out Austria because, for the Austrian Socialists, the issue was inextricably mixed up with the question of the survival of the Austrian Empire and therewith with that of Nationalism. The Austrians had to contemplate the possibility of the Austrian State being broken up by national Revolutions, which might or might not be Socialist, or half-Socialist, Revolutions as well. Some of them, mainly among those who belonged to the non-German groups, wanted such Revolutions to occur: most of the German-Austrian Socialists rather hoped that the Austrian State could be held together by the establishment of some form of cultural national autonomy that would not destroy its economic or political unity. This tended to make Austrian Social Democracy reformist in practice; but it could not, in face of the reactionary character of the existing Austrian Empire, declare against Revolutionism. It was therefore, even more than German Social Democracy, in two minds. The Belgians faced a less complicated, but still a sufficiently difficult situation. They certainly did not wish to break up the Belgian State into separate Flemish and Walloon

States; but the strength of Catholicism in the Flemish part of the country confronted them with a situation in which the winning of a Socialist majority looked most unlikely, and they were therefore unable to accept the optimistic view of the Germans about an early victory for Socialism by parliamentary pressure. This forced them to put great stress on creating, among their own supporters within the existing system, as much of a Socialist way of life as they could. It led them to establish, and to cling to, the close association of Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies, and Mutualities with the political party, and to accept the corollary that, if they established such a structure, the Catholics would be bound to do the same, so that there would be rival Trade Unions, Co-operative Societies, and social institutions, and a divided working class. I called my chapter dealing with Belgium 'The Socialist Stalemate' because it seemed to me that the Belgians were the first Western Socialists who realised that parliamentary democracy would not avail to carry them to victory as the representatives of a clear majority of the people.

There were others, no doubt, who might have realised this, for different reasons. Again and again in the Socialist writing of the period one finds the assumption that the proletariat either constitutes, or will soon come to constitute, the majority — even the great majority — of the people. The Germans were continually asserting this, and speaking as if the majority of the electorate they hoped to win to their cause would be a proletarian majority, even while they were eagerly wooing the non-proletarian electors. But was it true either that the proletariat was already a majority, or that it was in process of becoming so? The denial of this came chiefly from certain of the Syndicalists, such as Robert Michels, Georges Sorel, and Hubert Lagardelle, and also from many of the Reformists, who did not wish to rest their Socialism on a foundation of class-war. These critics insisted that the advanced capitalist societies, far from becoming polarised into two hostile classes of bourgeois and proletarians, were, in fact, becoming more and more differentiated, with a falling proportion of manual workers, a rising proportion of blackcoats and administrators, and a rising proportion of persons possessed of enough property to have something to lose besides their chains. We have seen how Kautsky and his

opponents fell out about the facts concerning the disappearance of the peasantry,[1] and how critics of Marxism fastened on the theory of 'increasing misery' as contradicted by the actual course of development under capitalism. It was a plain fact that, if 'proletariat' meant only industrial manual workers, it was most unlikely that under capitalism it would ever come to constitute a majority of the people, and highly probable that the further advance of capitalism would decrease its relative size. This decrease would not, of course, occur in backward countries, where the relative as well as the actual number of such 'proletarians' would go on increasing for a considerable time; but it would apply to the countries which most Socialists regarded as most nearly ripe for Socialism.

This difficulty could be got round by re-defining the term 'proletariat' so as to include the growing mass of salaried persons, and, if necessary, also the peasants, to the exclusion of the more prosperous farmers. But such re-definition made the 'proletariat' much less a homogeneous class, and much less capable of unified organisation and class-solidarity in action. It made the very characteristics which were held to endow the proletariat with its Socialist *élan* the properties, not of the whole proletariat, but of a section. This section could still be regarded as the 'vanguard', which by its cohesion and capacity for organisation would rally all the other elements behind it in the struggle for Socialism; but that amounted to saying that the force making for Socialism was not the proletariat as a class, but rather an élite within the proletariat — certainly not a majority of the whole people. If this élite was to dictate, the dictatorship would be that, not of a majority, but of a minority swaying a majority. If there was to be no dictatorship, but whatever government the majority wanted, the Socialists, in order to get and hold a majority, would have to dilute their policy to meet the wishes of the marginal electors.

This was the real Socialist dilemma of the years before 1914, which had brought with them the rise of large Socialist parliamentary parties in Western Europe, but had nowhere — not even in Germany — brought these parties within sight of a majority that would enable them to introduce Socialism with a democratic mandate. The Germans, like the rest, had been

[1] See p. 260 ff.

forced to dilute their immediate programmes in order to get even as far as they had got, and it looked as if further dilution lay ahead, despite the theoretical repudiation of Revisionism and Reformism in all their varieties.

What, then, was to happen next? Many Socialists, especially those with leftish sympathies, found a way out by prophesying that capitalism would soon collapse, either in a 'final' economic crisis of mass-unemployment and under-consumption or under the stress of inter-capitalist, imperialist war, and that this collapse of the old order would either convert the mass of the people to the cause of Socialism or endow the Socialists, as the one power standing upright amid the dissolution of the old order, with the strength to establish Socialism without waiting for the mass-conversion of the people, and to win and hold majority support by confronting the disorganised non-Socialists with an accomplished fact. As against this others, whose sympathies were with the Reformists, moved towards the idea that perhaps Socialism was not a system after all, so much as a tendency, and that the task of the Socialist Parties and movements was not, after all, to set up a Socialist society, but rather to move steadily in the direction of the Welfare State. But most Socialists did not commit themselves to either of these attitudes or expectations. They went on hoping for the best.

In some countries the question of revolutionary action hardly arose at all, though in all at least small groups of Revolutionists, or of persons who supposed themselves to be Revolutionists, were to be found, just as there were usually small groups of Reformists even in countries where the existing State structure allowed practically no scope for reform without revolution. In Great Britain, for example, the Social Democratic Federation talked a great deal about revolution, and abused the Fabians and the Labour Party for rejecting it; but there was never the smallest possibility of revolution being even attempted in practice. Keir Hardie advocated the general strike against war not as a Revolutionist but as an ardent pacifist; and the turbulent scenes at Liverpool and elsewhere during the great unrest of 1910–14 had nothing to do with revolution. Ireland, of course, was another matter; but the Irish Revolutionists were Nationalists, and mostly by no means Socialists, and even in Ireland the main threat of revolution,

up to 1914, came from the Ulster Unionists and not from the Left. The British Labour Party, to which the I.L.P. and the Fabians were attached, was not even professedly Socialist until 1917 or 1918, though it had passed a number of Socialist resolutions.

Nor did the question of revolution really arise, as a practical issue, in the United States, or in Australia or New Zealand, though in all these countries the Industrial Workers of the World combined the advocacy of it with very militant industrial activity. In these countries the Socialist and Labour Parties included Revolutionists in their ranks; but, except De Leon's Socialist Labour Party, they were not revolutionary parties. Revolutionists and Reformists were able to work together in them because revolution was not a practical issue. In all of them the franchise was wide, though women were still voteless, and the parliamentary system was worked on a basis of responsible government which made the way open, not only to piecemeal reforms, but also to structural changes in the social system, if a majority of the electorate clearly wanted them or gave persistent backing to the politicians who demanded them. In such countries, under the conditions that existed up to 1914, revolution could not be practical politics, except for a national minority such as the Catholic Irish — and not at all easily even for them.

There were countries in continental Europe as well where the question of revolution hardly arose as a practical issue. Norway had its national, but not a social, Revolution; but elsewhere in the Scandinavian countries, despite the narrow franchise, there was hardly any revolutionary movement. There was more in Holland; but it was based on weakness rather than strength, and was more a reaction against the futility of parliamentary politics than an expression of revolutionary will. Nor was revolution really 'practical politics' in Belgium, though strong pressure for parliamentary reform by means of strikes and demonstrations was. There were Revolutionists, especially among the Walloons; but the Belgian Labour Party had no large revolutionary element in its ranks. There were a few Revolutionists in French, but very few, except exiles, in German Switzerland. In all these countries, even in Switzerland, there were sharp industrial struggles, and in the

Scandinavian countries, one after another, the massed forces of Capital and Labour met in organised conflict; but there was never any prospect of the Danish, or Norwegian, or Swedish general strikes turning into Revolutions.

Nor, in truth, was there ever any real prospect of revolution in Germany. For the main body of German believers in 'the Revolution' had definitely postponed it to a day when Socialism would have won a parliamentary majority and, even then, looked forward to carrying it through by constitutional parliamentary procedures. The Germans, except a very small minority, were in practice and in attitude as reformist as the British. The leading Revolutionist among them, Rosa Luxemburg, was not a German but a Pole and was at least as much concerned with the Russian as with the German Revolution: indeed, she regarded them as one. Revolution, or at any rate Social Revolution, was an East European affair, and in its social aspect predominantly Russian.

There remain France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Portugal had a Revolution, but practically no Socialist movement. Spain was always seething with potential revolution, but could never combine its forces into a single movement; and Spanish Social Democracy, under Iglesias, was no more revolutionary in fact than German. Italy was always liable to *émeutes*; but the Socialists had little strength in the down-trodden south, and a gulf separated the industrial workers of the northern cities from the turbulent *lumpenproletariat* of Naples, or even of Rome. Finally, in France the Guesdists were like the Germans, the followers of Jaurès were defenders of a past Revolution rather than advocates of a new one, the Blanquists under Vaillant had shed their zeal for conspiracy, and most of the Syndicalists, even if they called their movement 'le syndicalisme révolutionnaire', had no immediate intention of endeavouring to overthrow the bourgeois Republic by violence. France had a large supply of Revolutionists, on the Right as well as on the Left, and there *might* have been some attempt, beyond Boulanger's, at a revolutionary *coup*. But such an attempt was, in fact, more likely to come from the Right than from the Left: the idea of a Syndicalist Revolution was never more than an idea: it never became a 'complot'.

In effect, West European Socialism, whatever it called itself,

was a reformist and not a revolutionary movement. In some countries it was still striving for universal (or at least manhood) suffrage and for the establishment of responsible government, and was using the demonstration general strike as one of its instruments for this purpose. In other countries these conditions existed already, and it was occupied mainly with demands for social legislation or with Trade Union affairs. The only issue that compelled it to face at all the question of revolutionary action was that of war; and it found this confrontation embarrassing and did not know how to deal with it. Finally, it allowed itself to be persuaded — by Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin, be it noted — to endorse at the International Congress of Stuttgart and to reaffirm at Copenhagen and Bâle the final operative paragraphs of its resolution prescribing the duty of Socialists in face of the threat and of the actual outbreak of war. These paragraphs fell short of clarity: otherwise they would not have been accepted at all. However interpreted, they committed the international Socialist movement to a great deal more than in 1914 it found itself able, or with any united desire, to perform. The Second International fell in ruins; and only in Eastern Europe did war fulfil the prophecy, so often made, that European War would mean inevitably European Revolution as well.