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The Two Nations

A May Day Message

Guy A. Aldred

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1963

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What he had to say had relevance, not merely to the moment, but to the epoch. He edited many socialist papers, among them: "Herald of Revolt," "The Spur," "The Commune," "The Council," "The New Spur," and "The Word." His autobiography, "No Traitors' Gait!" was issued in supplements and was unfinished at the time of his death.

all I have walked the fools' parade in prison, I know what it is like to be suffering imprisonment and, understanding that, I know how important it is to have a united movement to bring about one's release. Apart from the terrible, shocking and disgraceful execution of Grimaud, we have the terrible suffering of Ambatielos in Greece and we witness the scene in connection with the heroic defence of Tony Ambatielos by his wife Betty. This should call us to strong protest against fascism, which after all is the extreme and last word of reactionary capitalism. This should call us to extreme unity and bring about a practical unity as well as make for theoretical discussion and understanding. Therefore, I am for a working class movement that should be open to a discussion of all. But a working class movement should not just end in discussion, it should try to take definite steps forward towards a complete unity of its anti-parliamentary and parliamentary factions and bring about one great working class movement for action and for working class emancipation.

I say comrades—unite, rally round and think, above all think for yourselves, and in thinking for yourselves we will develop a richness of unity and a richness of understanding which will give power and classic authority to the working class nation. The nation of the poor will soon become the nation of the free in a richer and a freer world.

About Guy Aldred

He served a total of eight years in prison for his beliefs, and, true "to his principle, died in poverty.

Guy Aldred was a materialist in philosophy. He had no belief in the supernatural. To him "the mortal soul of Man is the only intelligent lord of matter." Yet many of his writings and speeches were imbued with a spirituality that raised them above the ephemeral utterances of most political speakers.

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of the entire working class and very little protest was made against this seizure and usurpation.

THE CHICAGO ANARCHISTS

In any case, May Day, 1889, was established under the shadow of the May Days that had more or less been celebrated in the past, but not with universal acclamation, in various parts of the world but dissociated from each other. In May Day, 1886, we had the demonstration in Chicago for the Chicago martyrs. They were arrested for what took place and a year later they were executed as the martyrs of the working class movement. Their spirit overshadowed for a number of years the celebration of May Day and, as you know, we had an outstanding governor of Illinois who departed entirely from his class and proclaimed that they were victims of a police frame-up and he brought about the release of those still in prison, regretting that he could not give back the lives of those who had already been executed. In the shadow of that great tragedy, the working class May Day was celebrated and held for a number of years. It came down to the time when we introduced the recognition of the suffering of Ferrier in Spain, and then today we meet under the shadow of the murder, by Franco, of Grimaud.³

Grimaud has been murdered for his loyalty to communism and to the working class. His murder should be remembered by all of us and it should unite the entire working class movement. Division by sectarian grouping will destroy that possible stand that can overthrow this “man of no mercy,”⁴ this enemy of the working class, Franco. It is no use telling me that we must be loyal to abstract principles of socialism, after

³ *Julian Grimaud*: A member of the Spanish Communist Party. He was executed by Franco in May, 1963, for his part in the Civil War 25 years earlier. The sentence of death was carried out despite world-wide protests.

⁴ “*Man of No Mercy*.” The Sunday Citizen description of the Spanish dictator, Franco, in its report of the “judicial murder” of Julian Grimaud.

ciples of Khrushchov and who now applaud Khrushchov as they once applauded Stalin, is not meant to represent any degradation of Khrushchov. I have a tremendous respect for Khrushchov and a tremendous respect for the work he is doing—this is not a ‘yes-man’ respect. I am quite prepared to criticise Khrushchov, as I am quite prepared to criticise Marx, as I hope others will be prepared to criticise me, and as I am prepared to criticise myself. Nevertheless, the great debt that history owes, the great debt that the working class owe as regard their future development. to the work of Khrushchov—to my mind can never be over-estimated. This May Day I believe in mentioning this as a part of my tribute to the importance of May Day.

There are two other things I want to say. First of all. I have drawn attention already to the fact that this May Day should be celebrated with particular energy and enthusiasm because it was on 5th May that Karl Marx was born. It is not merely a celebration of May, the vernal month of working class emancipation. it is also a celebration of the birth and the struggle in poverty of a very great pioneer of socialism, a very great pioneer of liberty—Karl Marx.

May Day. I believe my memory serves me rightly and I speak only from memory at the moment without any notes, May Day really came into importance about the year 1889. It was really established as a day of labour by the French labour movement and it did not include or exclude any particular branch. it was the movement of all the working class factions. May Day used to be like that in Glasgow, but the Labour Party with the connivance of various factions, some of whom later went to the Communist Party, succeeded in destroying the universal aspect of May Day and made it more and more just a parliamentary celebration. We have evidence of that in the last meeting addressed in Queen’s Park by the late Mr. Gaitskell when, obviously, the Labour Party platform was captured and the whole spirit of May Day was destroyed by the interests of one party, that claimed because it was the majority party to be the party

Publisher’s note

NOTE: This is one of the four speeches which Guy Aldred recorded on tape. It was not the first to be recorded, though it is the first to be printed. The other three speeches are being transcribed and printed. The publication date will be announced shortly. Donors and Subscribers will receive these pamphlets as they appear. Please order extra copies, and help the circulation.

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GUY A. ALDRED
THE TWO NATIONS
A May-Day Message

The text of a Speech delivered on May 5th 1963 in Central
Halls Glasgow.
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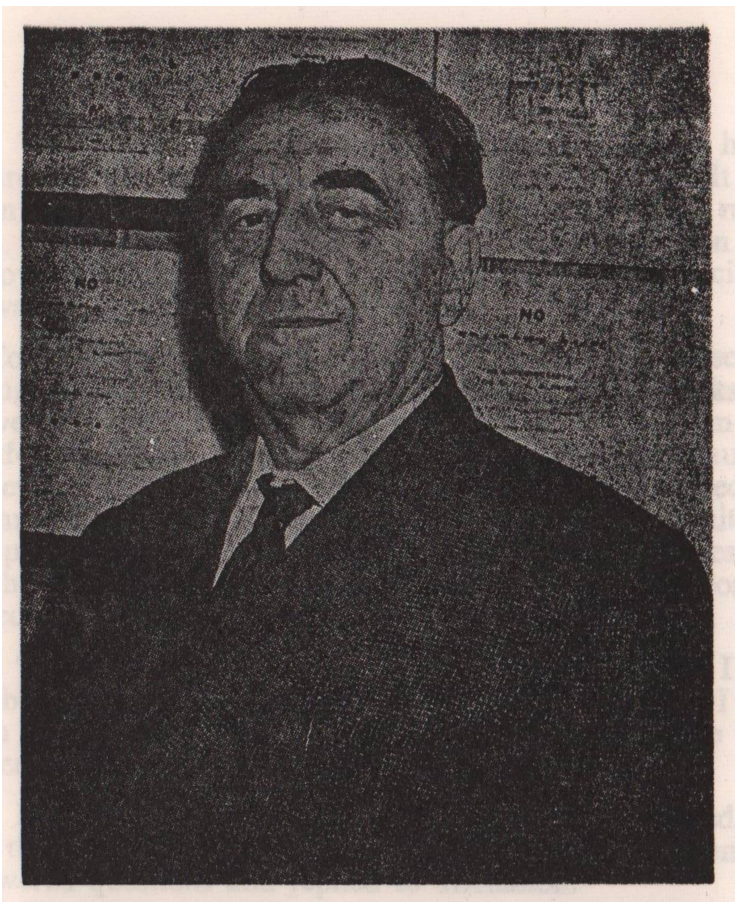


Photo: Guy Aldred, November, 1962

We have another problem—the problem of recognising the place that theory and education has in this struggle. Education should be taken away from the hands of the rich and placed in the hands of the poor. Only complete working class organisation—technical as well as educational. technical as well as prophetic, technical and scientific as well as visionary—can bring this about.

In my opinion the Russian Revolution has represented a tremendous change in the history of the world, and also the great Chinese Revolution has represented a tremendous change. I think when we come to analyse the Russian Revolution we will discover the great importance of Lenin. Not merely as a disciple of Marx, but as a practical disciple of Marx and as a practical scientific socialist. It may be that history will place Lenin in an even higher position than Marx is placed, because Marx, after all, although he laid the basis of scientific socialism, destroying utopian socialism, was but a kind of John the Baptist. Lenin was far more probably the Christ of the movement than Marx. Because Lenin did try to put into practical effect the ideas of Marxism, and the idea of scientific socialism and created a state which, despite its errors—its terrible errors—did tend towards the new social order and historically belonged to the social order of socialism. Stalin can pass out of the picture. Trotsky, despite his brilliant writing, was a much inferior man to Lenin and I do not think he would have hesitated to have agreed to that himself.

In Khrushchov, it seems to me, we have a man next great in importance to that of Lenin, but certainly a man of our time who has made a stand politically and diplomatically for the establishment of socialism. Accepting defeat and moving forward to victory, moving with his times, moving in front of his times, determined to save the world from slaughter, determined to make the world possible for revolution. What I have said about the ‘yes-men’ of the Russian Revolution. what I have said disparaging these people who claim to be the dis-

that they play no useful part in the struggle. This is sheer nonsense, pure sectarianism of the worst description. Sometimes the smaller groups are useless, and they act in a useless fashion and they do tend to destroy the unity of the working class, but let us remember that when they do, in the main, except from some standpoint of vanity, they do so from a sincere belief in the cause of the struggle. The larger groups, the groups that arise from the trade unions—the group that arises from the economic interest within the struggle—the groups that find their expression in the Labour Party, also have their tendency towards schism. Its members are moved not by a desire to serve the people, not by a loyalty to abstract principles, but by a loyalty to their own personal interests and their own status under capitalism. Quite definitely, whilst they arise from the ranks of labour, whilst their base is in the workshops, whilst their feet are in the mire of the slums and the mire of suffering, they belong—so far as their heads are concerned—to the capitalist class and they think in terms of the capitalist class. This is treason—and this is the one treason we must destroy. This treason can only be destroyed by establishing, somehow or other, a fundamental nation of the poor to which all power should belong. It should be our anti-parliamentary task, whether we are aroused by anti-parliamentarism or not, to create this definite organised nation of the poor, including all sections of the poor and creating free speech among the poor—just as the ruling class have established a nation of the rich.

Now our nation of the poor should enjoy the same right of free speech, governed by a loyalty to its own class interests and a loyalty to the economic struggle of the workers, as the nation of the rich has a right to create a state governed by its loyalty to the ruling class interests of the rich. Once this is understood, we have then two definite nations confronting each other throughout the world and standing for the great struggle for working class emancipation and finally for a free world everywhere.

We *do* change the world. One generation merges into another. The hopes of yesterday's heroes and martyrs become the inspiring slogans of the martyrs and heroes of today, and by them are passed on to the heroes and martyrs that will be tomorrow. An unchanging yet changeless logic of development.

—*The Word*; January 1961

Foreword

This speech was recorded at Guy A. Aldred's home address on the afternoon of Friday, 3rd May, 1963. It had been his intention to speak in person at the May Day meeting which would be held in the Central Halls on the following Sunday; but his doctor, and his close associates, prevailed upon him to make a recording instead.

Commenting on this, Guy Aldred said: "I am opposed to doing so, as it seems to me that a recorded speech lacks the verve and originality of a speech spoken direct from the platform. I feel this very much as a restriction, because I believe in extemporary speech—not in prepared speeches. I am afraid, however, that my strength may not permit me to speak with the vigour and the continuity that is necessary to the successful meeting. So I have prepared this recorded speech as a possible alternative to the original speech. In any case, I will attend the meeting, and if I am unable to speak I will hear it played to the audience. I will then answer questions as they arise. The audience can depend upon my reply to questions."

In the event that is what happened. Guy Aldred sat on the platform while the speech was relayed; then he answered questions and replied to discussion.

He delivered several more public speeches, both by tape and in person, before he died on the 16th October, 1963.

This speech has been transcribed from the tape by Ben Mullin who has also written an Introduction.

JOHN TAYLOR CALDWELL.

Introduction

This speech, recorded by “Guy Aldred close to the end of his life, represents a contribution to the general discussion on the fundamental problem facing the working class movement, namely, that of unity. That there is need for such discussion goes without question. Unless the conscious elements within the working class movement make some attempt to come to a general understanding, we will make no progress.

Guy Aldred was an uncompromising Anti-Parliamentarian, and this speech does reflect the Anti-Parliamentary position. Anti-Parliamentarism has been systematically misunderstood by the whole left-wing movement. We, of the left-wing movement,” are broken into innumerable sects and groups. Each group conducts a hate campaign against comrades in other groups, at times our activity of slander against our comrades exceeds our activity against the system. It does not matter now how this has come about. It is a fact and it is a fact that must be overcome. This short speech sets out to tackle this problem of division within the working class movement.

When we come to consider that, regardless of what group or party we belong to, we are members of the working class movement and that the working class movement has a tremendous history stretching back as far as we can go, we get some perspective of our own position in relation to the working class struggle. We should realise that our group is but a dot against this greater background. Groups and parties have passed away, and will pass away, but the struggle will go on. Our loyalty should not be to the group, right or wrong. Our loyalty should lie with the working class movement and with

whatever shape or form it does so—and does not live as the possessor of the wealth or the right to control wealth. Against them is the other class who live on their backs, who live as the controllers of wealth produced by the poor and who constitute the nation of the rich and the governing class in society. Between these two nations there exists an interminable conflict, a conflict that can only be ended by the triumph of the poor and the utter defeat of the rich. Our business is to ring about an end to this division, and an end to this struggle within the working class movement, and bring about a unity which will utterly defeat the ruling class movement.

This unity is defeated by the faction of schism¹ as well as heresy,² and by schism much more than by heresy. The schism consists in all these political parties fighting against each other in the name of labour. The schism consists in the economic struggle which again divides the workers on the industrial field, thinking it is right for one section of the workers to go without whilst another section should occupy a position of superior control of wealth and superior share of wealth. The schism consists in the distinction between the skilled and the unskilled worker, forgetting that there is no such thing as skilled and unskilled workers but that there is only such an institution as the worker. In this great struggle, particularly in its political expression and in the tendency towards careerism created by the economic division, you have this question arising of who splits the vote, who divides the worker?

It is assumed that the majority movement is the right movement of the working class and that in the majority movement there is no such thing as schism, no such thing as treachery. It is assumed that the only people who have no right to exist are those who belong to the smaller groups and sects and

¹ A *schism* ‘is a division, or breach of unity among people of the *same* beliefs.

² A *heresy* is a doctrine or set of principles *at variance* with the accepted ideas of a group or sect.

is to be found in a statement made by Lord Beaconsfield. He defined the two nations that existed within every so-called nation. He defined the struggle between these two nations as the real struggle. He spoke of the nation of the rich and the nation of the poor, and I think that in our approach to the question we have to bear in mind this definition. The nation of the rich and the nation of the poor, and from this angle we must create our concept of loyalty and disloyalty. The nation of the rich being in power, has a right to impose upon us from the standpoint of power and from the standpoint of power only, its definition of sedition and its definition of treason. We must elevate the nation of the poor to the position of the nation of the rich, we must make it the supreme nation and we must define sedition and treason as offences against the unity of the nation of the poor as distinct from the nation of the rich. This is a true political expression of the class struggle, one to be remembered and one to be put into effect.

In the international field today we have loyalty to sects—not loyalty to nations, loyalty to parties—not loyalty to class, but it is the class loyalty we have to consider. The working class must create its own nationhood. It must accept the fact that so long as we live under the capitalist system we are divided into economic classes or subdivisions. We are carpenters, we are joiners, we are electricians, we are labourers, we are motor drivers, etc., and we think in the terms of our own particular trade or industry, particularly in times of threatened unemployment. This is why among compositors we deprive women of the right to act as compositors or linotype setters, even though they are quite capable of doing such work. It is a restriction on labour supply because of the economic condition. All this must be wiped out—but it has to be accepted at the moment. Above all this class distinction and craft division or industrial division within the nation of the poor, we have overhead the one great economic fact that there is a nation of the poor that lives in insecurity, lives in misery, lives by selling its labour power—by

the overall struggle of the workers. The working class struggle has passed through every chapter in history, it has adopted many names and causes, it has been used by power-seeking groups, but it does represent a continuous history of struggle. There are many similarities between the early Christians in their “struggle against the ruling hierarchy of their time and the present day socialist movement in their struggle against current State and Monopoly Capitalism.

The early Christian movement was destroyed by the Deification of Jesus. It was destroyed when it turned its discussion to Theology and Mysticism. It was destroyed by fragmentation as a result of theoretical differences between this or that individual who then created his own little sect. It was finally destroyed when it was adopted by the ruling hierarchy and absorbed into the ruling class culture. All this has happened to the socialist movement.

The fact that the early Christian movement was destroyed did not mean that the working class movement had ended, indeed, it went on to blaze even more dramatic episodes across the pages of history. It is not my job here to retell the brilliant episodes in the history of the working class movement, but it is essential to stress that there is a connecting link between all the chapters in history, between all groups, they all represent an expression of the overall working class movement. The working class struggle encircles the globe. As I have already pointed out, its history goes back to earliest times. Against this broad background our group, or our party, is really a tiny fragment of the whole picture. This is essentially the Anti-Parliamentary position.

Anti-Parliamentarism is not a mania about the British Parliament. The term was first used to emphasise the difference between the traditional socialist struggle and the breakaway groups who became orthodox and concentrated their efforts and their resources on getting into Parliament. Many of the groups who went over to Parliamentarism became so involved

in that activity they lost sight of the struggle. They became so involved in becoming respectable, in becoming accepted by the ruling class; in electioneering; in raising funds; in becoming 'fit' to govern, that they created a breed of people who know nothing of the original cause of the struggle. The final development in this line of thought is to be found in the fact that the Labour Party now employs professional advertising agencies to sugar their palliative pills.

Anti-Parliamentarism is in reality the whole struggle of the working class movement. It believes in keeping the cause of the struggle well to the forefront of our activity. It is determined that we do not substitute the struggle between groups, for power or popularity, for the real struggle for working class emancipation. Anti-Parliamentarism does not confine its activity to one particular sphere or one particular area. The working class will fight on every front, this gives rise to the various groups. But we must be loyal to our comrades, it does not matter what faction they belong to. We must be loyal to our comrades in industry, we must be loyal to our comrades who work at the political level, we must be loyal to our comrades who concentrate on propaganda and we must be loyal to our comrades who are imprisoned or executed, who are ill-treated at the hands of the Capitalist State.

This is the message of this speech, which I ask you to read fairly with an open mind. Do not approach it from a sectarian position with a view to finding faults. You will find faults. Guy Aldred recorded this speech at the end of his life during a period of great suffering. It is remarkable that he still grappled with working class problems and was not overcome with personal anguish. I ask the reader to be as impersonal, and as impartial, in his consideration of this speech. And I further urge him to make its subject-matter a topic for discussion in his own group or party, or in any circumstance where such an important matter may be considered.

sation of industry and of credit, etc., at the very highest. This is not socialism, this does not give emancipation to the working class. Unless you have emancipation coming from and directed by and controlled by the workshops, you have no emancipation of the working class.

The point is, what can we do? This May Day I want to direct my thoughts to the question of what can we do to emancipate the people from the thralldom of economic partisanship, economic domination and political subsideriness to the interest of the capitalist state. That is the problem before all of us today. Let us analyse what we are. The capitalist state speaks about freedom of the press and freedom of speech, this claim is not quite correct but it makes a show of believing in it and its laws seem to suggest it on certain occasions. But why is the capitalist class able to talk about freedom of speech and freedom of the press, yet at the same time speak about sedition, speak about treason and shoot and execute people from time to time for alleged offences of treason—very often high class patriotism—and also imprison them for offences of freedom of speech which goes too far. The explanation is quite simple, it is because we live under a capitalist state and because the capitalist class constitute the political expression of the nation. Therefore, we have got to see what we can do to bring about the control of the political expression of the working class movement by the working class movement. We have to define accurately and impartially and scientifically the working class movement, we have to define directly and scientifically the working class nation and we have to understand exactly what socialism stands for.

THE KEY TO THE SOLUTION

I think that the key to the solution of this problem of working class organisation for genuine and effective social action

party. It sometimes tells the truth, it sometimes does not tell the truth. It does not function really and truly as a party in Britain, arising out of British conditions or the economic conditions of the workers here. It functions purely and simply as a satellite of the Russian Revolution, and whoever happens to be in power in the Kremlin. the Communist Party hails and supports that particular individual, or that particular group, as being the last word. In turn, it has supported Lenin who, after all, is outstanding. It has supported Trotsky, a lesser man to bruit. It has supported Stalin who, after the triumph of the revolution and after the successful activity of Lenin, turned his attention to destroying his own group for the sake of power. The Communist Party today supports Khurschov, who represents an entirely different policy from that of Stalin and, to my mind, really represents the struggle towards peace and communism. However, it is not because Khrushchov may be right, it is not because his policy tends to be the policy towards freedom with the minimum of suffering, it is purely and simply because he is in power in the Kremlin that the Communist Party in this country supports him. That is a 'yes-man' policy and it can no more be tolerated than a 'yes-man' policy under Stalin, who, after all, destroyed his own comrades and certainly was responsible for bogus trials.

Now we have the Labour Party. The Labour Party represents parliamentarism arising from the ranks of the working class, carrying on the traditions of the great struggle for parliamentary representation and, really the trader and the merchant style, for the control of finance so that there should be no absolute monarchy. At the same time, this parliamentarism represents, not the organisation of the working class, for the working class can have no power under the parliamentary system, but merely a control of the working class elements by the state system of capitalism. It never intends to get beyond that system, it never intends to inaugurate—really and truly—socialism, its aim is purely and simply to organise the nationali-

MAY DAY: Preliminary Note

May Day is an expression of pure nature worship. Its celebration connects up, naturally. with the class struggle and the economic interpretation of history; Without doubt. its traditions are those of working class struggle and celebration. They support the call of Spring to those who toil, they relate the harmony of nature to the toil and suffering of those who dwell on the Earth and suggest the need for escape. Hence the May month is one of inspiration to break free from bondage. "Slavery gives way to freedom. and a new atmosphere comes into the lives of the people. Much of the inspiration is mystical—but it is also a very real and true harmony that makes for battle and the struggle for justice. Finally, the tendency towards social freedom is established.

Thus May begins a new dance for the slaves, the dance of the apprentices. The old fashioned dance of a half-hearted and a half-witted sense of joy gives way to a true joyous exaltation in" social freedom. Men and women become adult in an atmosphere of true youth, and so the new social system is born. The very name of the month suggests the purpose of the month. May is so called from the goddess Maia. The name under which the Earth was worshipped at this season of the year. The first of the month has always been an important date in the religion of nature-worship. The famous 17th century poet, Spenser, salutes May as the sovereign month of man's happiness. the "fairest maid of all the year." It is characteristic of the enthusiasm with which the arrival of the month was welcomed. Yet the symbolism seems to have been a little overworked, and man, dwelling in slavery, must have found the joy extremely transient.

G. A. ALDRED.
Glasgow, May Day, 1963.

THE TWO NATIONS: A May-Day Menage

It is fifty-nine years since I mounted the public platform on May Day, in London, as an avowed socialist. I called myself a Social Democrat, but the Social Democratic definition was very temporary. I used more often the term—Socialist, and I thought as a socialist and I considered that I belonged to the great socialist movement. I did not differentiate between Social Democrats, Communists or Anarchists. Indeed, at that time I did not know very much about Anarchism. It is true that at that very moment I was not actually a member of ‘ the Social Democratic Federation. I did not join that organisation till a few months later, but I was very active in its ranks and very active among its comrades and I looked upon the S.D.F. as a great socialist body. In a way I dare say it was, particularly in London, where it seemed to have most root.

The Social Democrats differed from the I.L.P. and from the Labour Party. despite what the members of , either of these parties would have you believe to-day, and despite the fact that -some of the Social Democrats of that time became leading members of the Labour Party. They differed in this great respect, the chief characteristic of the Social Democrats was their proletarian language, their proletarian bearing and their proletarian association. I was a strong total abstainer and non-smoker, but I look back with amusement to the fact that the Social Democrats always met above public houses and usually had a drink of beer on the table at their branch meetings. The I.L.P. usually met in very careful coffee rooms, what we now term and what we termed in some places then-cafes. Their fare was always tea or coffee and cakes, not so that of the Social Democrats. I. of course, only took lemonade, but at the

Daniel De Leon’s criticisms of the social system were excellent very often. and he must have had played a tremendous part as a socialist educator of the people. but nevertheless he has built no organisation, his organisation is in its death throes and all that remains is the classical education left behind by his pamphlets. There is no doubt about the sincerity, no doubt about the vigour of Daniel De Leon, but at the same time there is no doubt about the failure of his propaganda. We have today the spectacle of a few groups of S.P.G.B. supporters and a few groups of S.L.P. supporters attacking each other, sometimes slandering each other but each claiming to be the true Marxist party.

Actually it does not matter what Marx taught. It is absurd for any party to claim to be the true Marxist party, we do not know what Marx would have done on a certain occasion, we can only speak in the terms of his general education, his general concept and his general knowledge. What specifically Marx would have done on this particular occasion or that particular occasion it is absolutely impossible to say.

In addition to these two socialist groups we have the anarchists, divided into individualists and communists. Let us take the communists as being the true expression of anarchism for, alter all, that does represent the working class approach. The Communist Anarchists spend more time hating Marx and admiring Bakunin than they do in preaching actual socialism or trying to organise the working class. Their one cry is direct action, but direct action cannot represent the action of all the people or cannot represent affective action on the part of a minority that will effect all the people and bring all the people into action against the system, it is, after all, very indirect action and a failure. Now that means we have three left wing groups divided into sectarian organisations thoroughly opposed to a united working class movement.

Against this we have brought into existence by the Russian Revolution. the Communist Party. This party is a ‘yes-man’

though anti-parliamentarism has tended to destroy a great deal of the call of parliamentarism and the actions of the parliamentarians has brought home. again and again. the great truth of anti-parliamentarism. The right to vote means the right not to vote. Not voting under capitalism is, after all, taking a part just as much as voting under capitalism. In the end it has to accept. on certain occasions, the conclusions supported by the parliamentary state. Hence, you have parliamentarism still triumphant even although it is destroyed by the voice of the people and is not supported outside parliament by the people. except at times of elections. My puzzle has been how this should be overcome.

When I first became a socialist there was a body in existence which still exists (somewhat different from what it was then. in my opinion) called the Socialist Party of Great Britain. That was a very small party and it certainly has not grown as a party. That party believed in pure parliamentarism. It rejoiced in being a Marxist party, but its Marxism really consisted in supporting the theories and the publications of Karl Kautsky. In 1904, I remember three pamphlets published by Kautsky and translated from the German. in which Kautsky puts forward his particular views on social democracy and in which the S.P.G.B. praised him as being a Marxist. Lenin afterwards destroyed the Marxist claims of Kautsky and pointed out that Kautsky was really anti-Marx and in many respects anti-socialistic. He was a reformist and certainly not a revolutionary. Ignoring this fact, the S.P.G.B. still pretends to be a Marxist party. still speaks in a narrow little sectarian way and will still not bring the workers anywhere near their social emancipation.

About the same time as the S.P.G.B. was born in Britain. the S.L.P. was imported from America. Its great founder was Daniel De Leon, who was in many respects a great pro-anarchist. He hated the anarchists because in many ways he supported the same ideas and preached the same ideas. He claimed to be a Marxist and the S.P.G.B. ridiculed his alleged Marxism.

same time the proletarian atmosphere of the Social Democrats pleased me much more than the respectable atmosphere of the I.L.P. meeting. I think this difference between assumed intellectuality and a bogus respectability, and the fustian. rustic attitude of the Social Democrats, represented the difference between socialism, whether correctly understood or not, and the respectable parliamentarism of the other factions.

I very soon broke with parliamentarism and began my activities as an anti-parliamentarian. My sympathies were with those who stood for direct-action, though I did not always agree with their protest. I remember speaking once for an S.D.F. branch in Regents Park. It was about the time of some direct-action activity, an act of assassination in Europe, by some alleged anarchist. It does not matter now whether the person was actually an anarchist or not he claimed to be. His act represented a protest by the very poor, the very downtrodden, against those who are established in wealth and in high position. I do not agree, and I did not agree, when a person sets himself up as prosecutor, jury and public executioner, as obviously the man who engaged in political assassination sets himself up to occupy all three positions in one person. To me, that savours of dictatorship. I remember this meeting, because the speaker before me went out of his way to denounce the Anarchist. He never analysed the position that made for this protest. He never analysed the economic condition that pervaded the misery of the man who was guilty of the act. He never analysed the position of the people who were responsible for judging him, nor the journalists who condemned him merely for the sake of their bread and butter. He merely went all out to denounce this representative of the poor who had been guilty of this action. While I did not sympathise with this action, I sympathised still less with the cant and the humbug of the condemnation, and when I mounted the S.D.F. platform I said so plainly and directly.

The result was a furor, and a great antagonism to me for daring to express this point of view. Nevertheless, I thought that an explanation of why a person commits an act of direct action was due. Also, I thought the action was less reprehensible than it seemed to be, though it was reprehensible. because the poor who are guilty of such acts of condemnation, by direct action, by assassination, were after all defenders of their own rights, protesting against some great injustice. Their enemies took the chance of using an entire state machinery. an economic power to destroy them, and smilingly went their way feeling how good they were, because they had killed nobody. Nevertheless. the evidence is there of the existence of this method of killing and crushing the lives of the people. When war comes they rejoice in the thousands they send to their deaths. Such humbug I do not understand and such humbug, as a socialist, I condemn.

I remember that before I spoke as a Social Democrat in favour of May Day, on May Day itself-that the previous May Day I spoke as a boy preacher. My concept of Christianity did not bother very much about whether Jesus was god or not, indeed it resented the idea, My approach historically towards this theological question was that of Unitarianism, although the first Unitarians were aristocrats and too respectable for my liking. I felt that original Christianity represented the revolt of the slaves and that it represented the uprising of the masses against the masters. From that point of view I viewed May Day before I became an actual socialist. There was a great deal of mystical error in my approach and I don't suppose I said much about the immediate class struggle, but I do remember that I spoke historically about the struggle of the common people and I co-related that speech to the struggles of the peasants and to the struggle of some of the historic events of the great reformation and to the renaissance period.

Subsequently, I found myself mixing among the anarchists. Here I found a note that gives birth to tonight's speech, and

that has played a part in my thinking ever since. I found myself among a small group of sectarians, mostly non-English speaking, in the East End of London. Many of their ideas I agreed with and much of their courage I admired, but their great anti-Marxism, their severe criticism of the materialistic conception of history, I did not understand. These people were more anti-Marxist than they were anti-capitalistic. They certainly preached direct action, but even direct action can be reformist and tends to lead to trade unionism, just as trade unions tend to become the basis of parliamentarism. This fact in both stages of its development was well illustrated in the case of John Turner of the Shop Assistants' Union. He organised the shop assistants and rendered them a great deal of service. As a member. he became the leader of his union and as the leader of his union he had to support parliamentarism and the idea of representatives of the shop assistants sitting in Parliament. It is true that he refused to stand himself and could easily have got a seat. but he did support parliamentarism because the economic interests of his union compelled him to do so. That seems to me to point to the fact that. within class society, you have the workers themselves divided economically because there are different economic interests. The workers serve under the social system of capitalism and are controlled by it. Inevitably, politically, they were controlled by the division into nations; and you had born a patriotism that found working class support, and it found this working class support down to the very period of the first world war. That division seemed to me to be fatal to the working class struggle.

During the years since then. I have still realised that the method of anti-parliamentarism-even when it boycotted the ballot box. a natural thing to do, or when it made some such protest at the ballot box like those I have made on several occasions. criticised by my comrades and ridiculed by the capitalist press-never acted as a definite anti-parliamentary activity but acted purely and simply as a parliamentary activity. Even al-