THE STATE AND THE SOUL

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ST. JOHN ERVINE

Hon. LL.D. St. Andrews
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Essex Hall Lecture 1939

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NOTE

The Essex Hall Lecture was founded by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in 1892, with the object of providing an annual opportunity for the free utterance of selected speakers on religious themes of general interest. The delivery of the lecture continues under the auspices of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, as a leading event during the course of the Annual Meetings of the Assembly. A list of the published lectures still obtainable will be found at the end of this volume.

Essex Hall, London,
April, 1939

THE STATE AND THE SOUL

AT the end of the Franco-German War of 1870, the mind of European man was made up: progress had definitely set in, and freedom was firmly and unshakeably established. A great and industrious people, who combined a love of music with a devotion to philosophy and theological adventure which were unusual in one racial group, had instantly and utterly defeated a degenerate empire in which the trappings of court ceremonial were mistaken for the emblems of power. Educated man could now confidently march on towards an ampler world, in which the dreams of the most rarefied idealist would be the commonplace experience of the simplest person in the community. The elder Mill's belief that people had only to be educated and they would become civilised, was felt to be fully justified: the millennium was about to begin. In 1862 Herbert Spencer had published his *First Principles*, in which, with as much rapture as a highly restrained

Victorian Radical philosopher could allow himself to feel, he had proclaimed the march of progress. "The views held respecting governments in general, of whatever form," he wrote, "are now widely different from those once held."

> "Whether popular or despotic, governments in ancient times were supposed to have unlimited authority over their subjects. Individuals existed for the benefit of the State; not the State for the benefit of individuals. In our days, however, not only has the national will been in many cases substituted for the will of the king, but the exercise of this national will has been restricted. In England, for instance, though there has been established no definite doctrine respecting the bounds to governmental action, yet, in practice, sundry bounds to it are tacitly recognised by all. There is no organic law declaring that a legislature may not freely dispose of citizens' lives, as kings did of old, but were it possible for our legislature to attempt such a thing, its own destruction would be the consequence, rather than the destruction of citizens."

Twelve years after the publication of Spencer's *Principles*, John Morley, writing in 1874, began an essay, *On Compromise*, with these words:

> "The right of thinking freely and acting independently, of using our minds without excessive awe of authority, and shaping our lives without unquestioning obedience to custom, is now a finally accepted principle in some sense or another with every school of thought that has the smallest chance of commanding the future."

These brave words still sounded true when, in 1913, Professor J. B. Bury, writing in his work, *A History of Freedom of Thought*, asserted that "the struggle of reason against authority had ended in what appears now to be a decisive and permanent victory for liberty. In most civilised and progressive countries, freedom of discussion is recognised as a fundamental principle."

I

OUR immediate ancestors, we ourselves, indeed, had warrant for the belief that progress, though it might be held up, was

inevitable, and that individual liberty was now unassailable. In a short time, immense and beneficial changes had been made in the constitution of society. Poverty had not been abolished, but it had been greatly reduced. There was little or no hardship of the kind that prevailed at the beginning of the nineteenth century and was still common in the youth of many persons in this hall. A great variety of social services, most of which would make Herbert Spencer turn in his grave if he could hear of them, had been established. Every child to-day receives, entirely free of expense to its parents, an education which, in comparison with that given in elementary schools forty to fifty years ago, may be called a university education. The school-leaving age is now fifteen, and may shortly be raised to sixteen. A large number of children receive some food in school, either at a small cost or free of charge. The path of the clever boy and girl from the elementary school to the university is made easy. Endowments and scholarships are available for able students, who may not only obtain higher education at home, free of much, or any, expense to their parents, but may even travel abroad in

search of it. The workman to-day is far better housed and fed and clothed and paid, and has much more leisure than the workman of yesterday. Unskilled labourers receive higher wages, and are more conveniently and comfortably housed than were many skilled workmen before the War. The game of lawn tennis, in my youth, was a class privilege: it is enjoyed to-day by thousands of working-class boys and girls. One has only to compare a photograph of a group of mill-hands in 1895 with a photograph of a group of mill-hands in, say, 1935, to perceive the immense changes in economic and social circumstances that have been made in our lifetime.

But perhaps I can make these changes most plain by stating a few facts about my father, who died in a great industrial city, Belfast, in 1886. He had never seen electric light, although he had heard of it, nor had he ever seen a telephone, a typewriter, a bicycle with pneumatic tyres, an X-ray photograph, a motor-car, a moving-picture, a machine-gun, an aeroplane, a submarine, a wireless set, or a national newspaper. It never occurred to him that a time would come when cooks would be

replaced by tin-openers, or a London newspaper be purchasable in Ulster almost as soon and as easily as in London itself. He lived in a city which is famous for its ships, but if any person had prophesied to him that, half a century after his death, an Atlantic liner would berth in New York four days after it had started from Southampton, he would have replied that although Belfastmen could do much, even they could not do that, and if they could not, who could? Had the prophet, driven to extremities and exasperation by my father's incredulity, foretold a time when I, sitting in my house in Devonshire, would listen to Miss Amy Johnson describing, in Melbourne, her solo flight in eighteen days from England to Australia, his scepticism would have turned to concern for the state of the prophet's mind; and if that prophet, now rendered desperate by derision and doubts of his sanity, had gone on to foretell that Mr. H. F. Broadbent, five years later, would make the same flight in less than seven days, and that Miss Jean Batten would not only fly to Australia, but fly back to England in a little longer than a month, his assurance of the prophet's madness would have been complete. I lately

met a man who had left Delhi early on a Friday morning and arrived in London before eight on the following Sunday night. My father might, perhaps, have wondered whether it was truly progress to be able to listen to a man speaking in Australia when the man had nothing to say that was worth hearing. Platitudes are still platitudes though spoken at a distance, and a fool remains a fool six thousand miles away. His derisive laughter would not have been louder than ours if, in 1914, we had been told that, a decade later, we should be able to range through Europe by merely turning a small knob on a little wooden box, listening to bells in Oslo two minutes after we had heard bells in Rome. Like Caliban, we can say:

> the isle is full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
> That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
> Will make me sleep again.

Which of us here, ten years ago, would have believed that a day would come, and very soon, when the whole world would listen in to a king's death. What my

father would have said to the prophet if he had been informed that I, his son, while sitting in a room in Alexandra Palace, would be visible and audible to many people, each sitting in his own home several miles away, I dare not imagine. Many of the mechanical comforts and conveniences we enjoy are so familiar and commonly distributed that we forget how recently they were invented. I shall not soon forget my astonishment when, one morning, my secretary asked me what sort of broadcasts we had in the War. Her astonishment equalled mine when I told her that we hadn't any, that broadcasting was not one of the horrors of the War, but of the subsequent peace.

This narrative of social and economic changes for the better, would seem, at first thought, to justify every hope, however fantastic it may have appeared, that our grandfathers held for the future. If man could so thoroughly conquer time and space, there were no limits to the moral and spiritual, as well as the material, improvement of man himself. Most of the evil in the world, we were assured, was the result of ignorance and poverty. Men behaved badly because they were bred

badly. They had only to be well-bred, and almost instantaneously the evils of society would disappear. Such were the hopes of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers. The hopes were honourable, but they proved to be delusive, and the joyful expectations evoked by the spectacle of continuing and increasing mechanical development, have subsided so fast that a vast despondency, amounting, in some instances, to despair, has settled on almost every young man's mind. Our grandfathers greeted the future with a cheer: their great-grandsons greet it with a sneer.

Can we doubt that the mental energy which, in a century, has transformed the whole mechanical organisation of the community, so that a village labourer is better housed to-day, and has infinitely more amenities than a baron in the Middle Ages, and a servant girl in a middle-class family has a better bedroom than was available for Mary, Queen of Scots, in Holyrood Palace, will quickly find a means of ensuring that every man shall not only have all the necessities of life in ample measure, but shall be supplied with the luxuries that he finds essential to the fulfilment of his individuality?

II

BUT although we perceive these changes and improvements, we perceive also that there has been an equally large loss of spirit and intellectual independence. Herbert Spencer and John Morley and Professor Bury gazed upon the world and, like God, found it good. The foundations of freedom, they said, had been well and truly laid, and nothing now could overthrow them. Let me repeat John Morley's words:

> "The right of thinking freely and acting independently, of using our minds without excessive awe of authority, and shaping our lives without unquestioning obedience to custom, is now a finally accepted principle in some sense or another with every school of thought that has the smallest chance of commanding the future."

"Is now a finally accepted principle!" How hollow those words sound in our ears, how startled John Morley would be if he could be brought back from the dead and, after surveying Europe, were confronted

with his own assertion. What is the explanation of this singular paradox that, at the same time that there has been an immense development in the mechanical aids to a civilised life, there has also been a remarkable decline in personal liberty? It is not only that the mind and spirit of the world have everywhere collapsed in some degree, but that a school of politicians has arisen which approves of this collapse, and demands that there shall be a still greater collapse. The State has not been subjugated, as Herbert Spencer demanded it should be: the individual has; and the extent to which this subjugation has occurred may be estimated when we realise that Herr Hitler demands the "blind obedience" of his helots, while Signor Mussolini, the leader of one of the most liberty-loving nations in Europe, boldly declares, amid applause from the young, that freedom is a fetish and democracy a putrefying corpse. "All for the State," the Duce exclaims; "nothing outside the State; nothing against the State." "Fascism," he writes in *The Political and Social Doctrine in Fascism*, "conceives of the State as an absolute, in comparison with which all individuals or

groups are relative, only to be conceived of in their relation to the State." "The Fascist State," he continues, "organises the nation, but leaves a sufficient margin of liberty to the individual; the latter is deprived of all useless and possibly harmful freedom, but retains what is essential; the deciding power in this question cannot be the individual, but the State alone." The contention is as old as organised man. It prevailed in the mind of Plato no less than in the mind of Marx, and it amounts only to this, that those who have somehow secured authority shall compel the rest of us to believe that they have every right to that authority, that all they do is good and unquestionable. "Believe; obey; and fight," is the Duce's order to his Fascists. Protestants, no less extreme than Roman Catholics, have attempted to govern the minds and conduct of entire nations on the principle that there is only one way of living, and that the one which they approve. Among the first German Reformers was a man called Münzer, who taught the terrible doctrine that the godless have no right to live except in so far as they are permitted by the elect. It was derived direct from Rome. Münzer, of course, was to decide

who were the elect and who were the godless. "We Germans," General Göering writes in his book, *Germany Reborn*, "believe that in political affairs Adolf Hitler is infallible, just as the Roman Catholic believes that in religious matters the Pope is infallible."

The fears which caused Herbert Spencer to call socialism the coming slavery, and made him apprehensive of the powers that were being accumulated by the State, have been fulfilled; and many men are becoming uneasy about this monster, the community, which we have created to serve us, but which insists that we shall serve it.

The State may rob and pillage its members: it may torture and imprison them without a trial or even a charge; it may detain them in protective custody after they have been acquitted of any charge that has been brought against them; it may deny them the right to profess the religious faith in which they believe; it may deport them, after expropriation, and interfere with their liberties in the countries to which they have been deported; and it may put them to death on charges that are demonstrably false. Certain States now claim complete

possession of those who were born in them, even after they have been deprived of their citizenship and are naturalised in other nations. The Nazis attempt to control the lives of refugees by threatening those who employ them with the loss of trade, and by threatening the refugees themselves with the persecution of their relatives who remain in Germany. The Government of Russia asserts an absolute ownership of its inhabitants. When, for example, a distinguished scientist, Professor Kapitza, wished to leave Russia to return to the laboratory which was prepared for him at Cambridge, the Soviet Government forbade him to leave. This claim of the State to ownership of its citizens was admitted by such scientists as Lord Rutherford and Sir Frederick Hopkins. They pleaded with the Communists to relax their embargo, but acknowledged, diplomatically, no doubt, that the Communists had the right to impose it. "The Royal Society," Sir Frederick Hopkins said, in words almost identical with those published in *The Times* a few days earlier by Lord Rutherford, "fully recognises the legal claim of the Soviet authorities upon Professor Kapitza's services." But what is

this claim? It is not merely the claim of an employer to labour in return for wages or assistance, one which expires when the service has been rendered and involves no limitation of the labourer's independence, since he can evade the labour, if he wishes, by refunding the wages. It is infinitely more than that. It is a claim to absolute control of Kapitza's life, a claim to say when and where and how he shall work, a claim to lay down conditions of service which he must obey, though he will not be permitted to have any power of decision in drafting those conditions. It is, in brief, a revival of ancient laws in this and other countries, such as the Statute of Labourers in the time of Edward III, under which the authorities sought not only to tie workmen to a particular place, but to stipulate what price they should be paid for their labour. Professor Kapitza is actually, rather than virtually, the Soviet's slave.

III

THE fact that these attempts to suborn the spirit are very old, does not make the effort to revive them more tolerable. It

makes them intolerable, for we had hoped that we had got rid of ancient acts of tyranny, and are appalled to find them as rampant as ever. When Professor Julian Huxley, in a small book entitled, *If I Were Dictator*, asserts that under his oppression, if it were permitted, he would not "allow organisations to use large sums of money to exert pressure in favour of their metaphysical views," I do not feel myself reconciled to the tyranny he proposes by the fact that in the Austrian Empire, as late as the middle of the last century, much thinking was held to be at variance with good citizenship, and the teaching of metaphysics, political economy, and the like was discouraged. The late E. F. Wise, who was a Labour Member of Parliament, informed his readers in the chapter he contributed to *Problems of a Socialist Government*, that "It must be made quite impossible for any succeeding Government, by mere repeal of legislation or other means, even to attempt to reconstruct the capitalist system." I am not appeased for this proposal to bind the future with dead hands, by the knowledge that Edward III endeavoured to control trade by forbidding his subjects to send any goods abroad

to be sold, "under penalty of death and confiscation," and that he enacted that this law "should be unalterable either by himself or his successors." It is impossible, of course, for anyone to control the future so rigidly as that. We do not know what the needs of the future will be, and cannot legislate for it. But although we cannot bind our grandsons, we can bind ourselves, and we may inflict irreparable injury on our own generation in vain attempts to control the next.

The history of those who have set out to do good to other people, compels us to suspect the durability of their intentions. The claim Professor Huxley would make, if he were dictator, to control the mind of the community for the community's general welfare, is already made by the Roman Catholic Church, the Soviet Government of Russia, the Nazi Government of Germany, the Fascist Government of Italy, and the De Valeran Government of the Irish Free State. Mr. De Valera will not permit the publication or advertisement in his part of Ireland of any book which mentions birth control, even if it does so only to denounce it. When Mr. De

Valera wishes to know what is good for his countrymen, he looks, as he himself has said, into his own heart: an assertion that might have been made, in regard to himself and the people he governed, by the most absolute autocrat in history. One of the first acts of the Eirean Government was to withdraw from the people of the Free State the limited right they had to divorce. It is not now possible for any person in that community who is unhappily married to have his marriage dissolved. A candidate for employment in the Civil Service must understand Gaelic, a language which the overwhelming mass of Irishmen neither know nor wish to learn, and is of less use to them than a knowledge of Swahili. Restrictions of every sort, ecclesiastical and lay, are now imposed on Eireans which were not imposed upon them when they lay suffering in subjection to the brutal, licentious, and oppressive Saxon.

How profoundly the mind of man may be constricted by a well-intentioned, arbitrary Government is shown by a survey of the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* issued by the Vatican, which, in its 1938 edition, occupies more than five hundred pages.

We learn that a Roman Catholic may not read *The Book of Common Prayer* or the Anglican Church *Catechism.* Taine's *History of English Literature* is as firmly forbidden to him as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, nor may he read Frederick Denison Maurice's *Theological Essays*, or Montaigne's *Essays*, or the *Principles of Political Economy* by John Stuart Mill. Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*, and Andrew Lang's *Myth, Ritual and Religion* are both banned. So is Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici.* The entire work of Giordano Bruno, Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, Voltaire, Proudhon, Alexandre Dumas, Renan, Emile Zola, D'Annunzio, Anatole France, and Maurice Maeterlinck are Indexed against Roman Catholics, who must be careful how they read in the works of Addison, Lord Acton, Balzac, Jeremy Bentham, Henri Bergson, Auguste Comte, Heine, Helvétius, Immanuel Kant, George Sand, Swedenborg, Spinoza, Stendhal, and James the First, some of which are banned and some are not. Pascal's *Pensées* may be read, provided that they are not accompanied by Voltaire's notes. Voltaire, indeed, is especially anathema to the

Roman hierarchy, as Mr. Alfred Noyes recently learnt. A Catholic who criticises his Church, however mildly, is in danger of having his work and himself condemned. Such was the fate of a great German theologian, Dr. Döllinger, when he published a work against the doctrine of Papal Infallibility, nor was the condemnation restricted to that work, for he himself was excommunicated and denied, at his death, that fortification by the rites of his Church which every Catholic desires. We can understand, even if we cannot approve, the condemnation of all the works of the Abbé Loisy and that great French historian of religion, Professor Charles Guignebert, whose books *Jesus*, and *The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus*, have deeply impressed their readers; but it is hard to realise why Paul Sabatier's *Life of St. Francis of Assisi* and Miss M. D. Petre's *Autobiography and Life of Father Tyrrell* have been banned, especially as Father Tyrrell's exegetical works themselves have not been Indexed. Oliver Goldsmith's *Abridged History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Death of George II* is condemned in company with Hallam's *Constitutional*

History of England from the Accession of Henry VII to the Death of George II, and his *View of the State of Europe During the Middle Ages*. Charles Darwin has somehow escaped censure, but his grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, was not so fortunate: his *Zoonomia* was Indexed in 1817. One may, perhaps, be able to think of a reason why Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* and *Les Misérables*, and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and *Salammbo* should be forbidden, but the Papal authorities must surely have been in a highly censorious mood when they banned Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* and, more amazingly, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded: a Series of Familiar Letters from a Beautiful Damsel to her Parents*.

IV

IT is obvious from this account of a few of the books which have been banned by the Roman Catholic Church that any government, ecclesiastical or lay, which exercises arbitrary power, can mould or maim the mind of the governed. It may manipulate the facts to its own advantage.

Exegetes are nearly all agreed that well-meaning editors "improved" the Gospels, either by the omission of awkward passages or the interpolation of others that were nearer to their hearts' desire. Jewish scholars, such as Dr. Joseph Klausner, hold the theory, which is supported by Professor Charles Guignebert, that the authors and editors of the Gospels worked with a strong bias against orthodox Jews, which was natural enough in men who believed that their Leader had been crucified at these people's behest. Just as Josephus manipulated the facts of Jewish life and history, colouring some, modifying others, and inventing or suppressing those that were essential to, or awkward for, his argument that the Jews were worthy of the high respect of the Gentiles, so the authors and editors of the Gospels manipulated them to make the Jews seem less worthy of respect.

The Roman Catholic Church has never formally abandoned its claim to authority over every human being, whether he be a member of that Communion or not, and although the claim cannot be maintained in practice, we may wonder what would happen to the mind of any community in

which its decrees could be enforced. In 1910 Professor Lépicier, who was created a Cardinal in 1927, published a book, entitled *De Stabilitate et Progressu Dogmatis*, which, according to Pope Pius X, contained "the very kernel of Catholic doctrine." In this work, "Lépicier taught, among other things that the power to deprive heretics of their rights extends to the right of life itself; that formal heretics deserve not merely to be excommunicated but to be killed; that the power to kill for heresy belongs both to the State and the Roman Church, and that the latter should not shrink from discussing this teaching out of regard for the sentiment of the modern age."[1]

Mr. Charles C. Marshall, discussing in his book, *The Roman Catholic Church in the Modern State*, the Papal claim to supreme power in all spiritual affairs and some secular affairs, quotes a demand that was recently made by that venerable and valiant pontiff, the late Pope Pius XI. "In Article 5 of the Concordat in the Italo-Vatican Agreements the Pope demanded and secured the provision that

[1] Summarised in *The Roman Catholic Church in the Modern State*, pp. 287–288, by Charles C. Marshall.

those who have incurred censure from the ecclesiastical authorities of the Church, cannot be employed or retained by the State of Italy in any office or employment in which they may be brought into immediate contact with the public; the offender against the Church becomes *pro tanto* an outlaw in the State, and is divested of his right to earn his daily bread as a schoolteacher or postmaster in an Italian village. In the Pope's letter to Cardinal Gasparri he demands that the provision be given a retroactive effect."[1] The demand that the heretic should be deprived of his means of livelihood would, if Cardinal Lépicier could have had his way, have included a demand that he should be deprived of his existence.

The Commissars of the Soviets do not scruple, any more than the Early Fathers, to change the words of an awkward author, and it is on record in works written by writers who are favourable to Communism, that the Russians have added a scene with a proletarian moral to *Hamlet*, and have made such alterations in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that it seems to have come from the hand, not of Shakespeare,

[1] Pp. 288–9.

but of Karl Marx.[1] There is no need to labour this argument, so far as the totalitarian states are concerned, for it is apparent to everybody and is not denied by the totalitarians themselves.

V

THE possibility that liberty will ever be reduced in Great Britain, must appear as remote to you as the possibility that it should ever be reduced anywhere in the world or, at all events, in Europe, must have appeared to Herbert Spencer, John Morley, and Professor Bury, but if that be so, you cannot have heard of eminent and advanced economists, politicians, and sociologists of our time who candidly tell their readers that the curtailment of freedom is an essential part of the policy they advocate. Some of them, such as the late Lord Allen of Hurtwood, hope that the curtailment will only be temporary, but others, such as Sir Stafford Cripps, Mr. Attlee, Mr. G. D. H. Cole, and the late E. F. Wise do not disguise their desire that

[1] *The Theatre in a Changing Europe.* Edited by Thos. H. Dickinson. Chapter on the Russian Theatre, by Joseph Gregor, pp. 83–4.

the curtailment shall be permanent. Professor Julian Huxley, as we have seen, confesses candidly that if he were dictator, he would do his utmost to make gramophone records of the rest of us. A distinguished economist, Mr. John A. Hobson, having a remnant of Liberalism left in him, mourns the imminent demise of freedom, but is none the less determined to attend its funeral. Like Brutus, stabbing Julius Caesar, he is anxious that the crime shall be committed in a very gentlemanly manner: he will, therefore, thrust his dagger only a little way into Caesar's body in the hope that its presence there will not be noticed. Mr. Hobson, in two books, one called *Poverty in Plenty*, the other *Democracy*, informs the proletariat that if they receive assistance from the State they must not expect to retain their freedom. "The recent administration of the 'dole,'" he says in *Poverty and Plenty*,

> "has already to some extent disposed of the untenable position that an unemployed person in receipt of relief may refuse work in another occupation or another place. In other words, the right to work does not carry the additional

> right to choose your own work or your work-place. If, as is the fact, you are working for the community, you must let the community decide what you can do best. . . . The individual 'right to work' carries as its correlative the right of society to allot to each the work which it is best for society that he should do, and to fix the wages and other conditions of his employment. If he cannot make a satisfactory bargain with a capitalist employer, he must accept public work under conditions prescribed by the State."

This doctrine, which has been enforced in Russia to the extent of removing large numbers of peasants against their will from one part of the Soviet Republic to another, many miles away, and has, I have already suggested, resulted in the virtual enslavement of Professor Kapitza, was enunciated after the Black Death by Edward III at a time when the economic structure of society was endangered by the shortage of labour and the consequent demand for higher wages and freedom of movement which was made by the working class. I have yet to read in the works of

any advanced economist, approval of the Statute of Labourers, yet a harsher variation of it is publicly applauded even by so good a Liberal as Mr. Hobson. "A democratic society," he says in *Democracy*:

> "will recognise a 'right to work,' or, alternatively a 'right to subsistence,' on the part of its members, but not a right to work in any occupation or on any terms each member chooses. As soon as it is recognised that the value of all work is determined by the needs and well-being of society, it becomes evident that a worker has no longer full liberty to choose his work or to insist upon the particular conditions under which he does it. Over his 'right to work' must be set the right of society that he be set to do work which he can do best in the interest of society."

"The right to strike," Mr. Hobson goes on to say, will "disappear in a society organised on a basis of economic equity."

One wonders what would become of a Keats or a Shelley who, in a highly materialistic society, refused to have his work set for him by the community, persisting, instead, in the belief that the

writing of poetry was the work for which he was best fitted, and that he preferred to do it, not in England, but in Italy. Professor Kapitza thought that he could work better in Cambridge than in Petrograd, but the Soviet Government did not agree with him, and he was not allowed to come to Cambridge. The test of a well-governed community, surely, is not the latitude it allows to conventional and routine people, but the latitude it allows to heretics and eccentrics? "The most certain test by which we judge whether a country is really free," Lord Acton wrote, "is the amount of security enjoyed by minorities." Liberty, to him, meant "the assurance that every man shall be protected in doing what he believes to be his duty against the influence of authority and majorities, custom and opinion."

Lord Allen of Hurtwood, in *Britain's Political Future*, is no less frank than Mr. Hobson. "Whatever may be their ultimate intention," he says,

> "the first generation of men who accept economic equality, cannot expect to retain much personal liberty. Socialists who believe that the system of private

profit-making must be eliminated, and an equalitarian society established, in order that poverty may be abolished, cannot deny that this new form of society would require every citizen to take his orders from a vast network of authorities: local, national, and industrial. We must acknowledge frankly that this might involve a diminution of personal liberty, for, as Mr. Brailsford says, it 'conceives freedom as the character of *society* rather than as the right of individuals.' All men may, it is true, be equal, but none are likely to be free, except perhaps the politicians to whom will have been entrusted the task of government. Whether it will be possible for our future governors in such an elaborately planned equalitarian society to keep their hands off liberty of thought and expression, I do not know. Liberty is the right of individuals and must always be something experienced by units. If it was to become *social* instead of *personal*, this would only mean that a national unit would be substituted for an individual unit, which might well involve, as we know both from Germany and Russia, the end of any personal

liberty not approved of by the national or communal unit."

So says Lord Allen, whose suspicion that the politicians to whom government is entrusted in an equalitarian state, will not be able to keep their hands off liberty of thought and expression, that they themselves, indeed, will soon become the only persons permitted to have any freedom at all, has been amply justified by the behaviour of the Commissars who have abolished equality and obtained for themselves the position of a privileged class.

VI

THE extent to which those who loathe individualism are prepared to go to suppress individual effort and thought is made plain in *Problems of a Socialist Government*, in which a number of eminent Socialists, including Mr. Attlee, Mr. G. D. H. Cole, Mr. H. N. Brailsford, Sir Charles Trevelyan, and Sir Stafford Cripps, very plainly state what they propose to do if, through some oversight on the part of Providence, they gain control

of this country. Mr. Bertrand Russell, in *Power*, remarks that if "a Conservative Parliament had reason to fear that the next election would produce a Communist majority, which would expropriate private property without compensation," it "might well imitate the Long Parliament and decree its own perpetuity." This is precisely what a political party in this country proposes to do, but the party is not Conservative: it is Labour.

Sir Stafford Cripps, in his contribution to *Problems of a Socialist Government*, informs his readers that "the first requisite in bringing about a peaceful revolution is to obtain a Parliamentary majority of adequate size to carry all measures through the House of Commons," an assertion which is as democratic as any man could wish it to be, but Sir Stafford does not continue in this democratic mood for long. "Unless during the first five years so great a degree of change has been accomplished as to deprive capitalism of its power, it is unlikely that a Socialist Party will be able to maintain its position of control without adopting some exceptional means such as the prolongation of the life of Parliament for a further term without an election."

I have already cited the late E. F. Wise's statement, in his contribution to this work, that "It must be made quite impossible for any succeeding Government, by mere repeal of legislation or other means, even to attempt to reconstruct the capitalist system," even, we may suppose, if the overwhelming majority of the electors desire it to be reconstructed.

Sir Stafford Cripps wishes the members of the Socialist Cabinet to be formally appointed by the members of the Socialist Party, "and the Party must have the right at any time to substitute fresh Ministers in the place of any it desires to recall." The wishes of the electorate are not to be considered in these appointments, and it is possible that, under the scheme proposed by Sir Stafford, a Minister who has been unseated by his constituents, may continue in the Cabinet, merely because the Socialist Junta says he is to do so. "When the Party has come to a decision upon these two matters," that is to say, who shall be Prime Minister and who shall be his Cabinet colleagues, "the list of Ministers will be submitted to the Crown and their appointment will follow." As the Crown, it appears from this statement, will not

have any power of veto, one wonders why the Party should take the trouble to submit its list to the monarch, or why the monarch should take the trouble to read it.

The advent of this arbitrary Government, Sir Stafford admits, is likely to provoke alarm and opposition. The Government must deal with the opposition very promptly. First, it must pass an Emergency Powers Bill through all its stages in a single day. Debate will, apparently, not be permitted. "This Bill will be wide enough in its terms to allow all that will be immediately necessary to be done by Ministerial orders. These orders must be incapable of challenge in the Courts or in any way, except in the House of Commons," where, of course, the Party will have a mechanical majority. The Judiciary, the House of Lords, and the Crown, as interpreters of the law or as suggesters of amendment or further thought, will be disabled from all action. The House of Commons itself will be unable to control the Ministers since these oligarchs will have obtained in one day authority under the Emergency Powers Act to do whatever pleases them without consulting anybody. The electorate, if it

shows signs of becoming restive, will be suitably dealt with. Parliament will simply prolong its own existence indefinitely, and will—and here we reach the second of Sir Stafford's plans—quell all opposition by force. He does not say what kind of force he proposes to use, nor where he proposes to obtain it.

The protection against Parliamentary aggression which every subject of the sovereign possesses in the right of recourse to the Judiciary, from the bench of magistrates to the Court of Appeal, the House of Lords and, in the last resort, the King himself, is to be taken from him. "This power," of the Courts to declare Ministerial orders invalid, "must be taken from" them, and "the sole right to challenge such orders must rest with Parliament," the Parliament which is controlled and directed and practically owned by a mysterious body called "the Party," of whose constitution and membership we are told nothing. "With this alteration," Sir Stafford blandly asserts, "a far greater bulk of the legislative work can be put through by this method than is the case even at present." We can well believe it, especially when we learn, a page later,

that "the central feature of Socialist legislation" will be the annual enactment of "a Planning and Finance Bill for the year."

> "Once this Bill is passed little other legislation by Act of Parliament will be required, and such as is necessary will be of secondary importance only and will be so treated. It will be made impossible, by appropriate resolutions, to re-discuss the merits of the Plan once that Plan has been decided upon. . . . Even on this Bill it will be necessary to proceed by time-table, so as to obviate obstruction and waste of time. Such secondary legislation as arises out of the plan will be brought before Parliament for a short second reading stage which will be on the floor of the House, and one final stage, during which Government amendments alone will be dealt with."

Sir Stafford does not intend to limit his arbitrary proposals to Parliament and the people in general: they will be pressed on members of the Civil Service. Persons in the employment of the Government who show themselves opposed to, or even critical of, its proposals, will be replaced "by persons of known Socialist views."

Mr. Cole, like Sir Stafford Cripps, is all in favour of tribunals entirely manned by Socialists. The country is to be divided into districts which are to be governed by "Regional Development Councils . . . dominated by Socialists," and having Socialists "in the key positions among their staffs of officials."

> "Regional Development Councils can be recruited largely from Socialists with experience of local government work; and the National Planning Commission, while it must be chosen largely on grounds of technical competence in particular fields, must have as its leading officials well-tried Socialists who possess the necessary expert qualifications."

What will become of these Socialists if ever they find their expert knowledge in conflict with their Socialist principles, is not stated.

Mr. Cole is anxious that the special commissioners who are appointed by the Government to do this or that job, shall not suffer under criticism from Parliament. "It will be best," he says, "as soon as Parliament has conferred on the Government the necessary emergency powers, for

it to meet only as often as it is needed for some clearly practical purpose, leaving the Socialist administrators," who, among other tasks, are to direct industries, "to carry on with the minimum of day-to-day interference. There will be no time for superfluous debating while we are busy building the Socialist commonwealth." Industry is to be withdrawn from "capitalist hands" and transferred to the control "of Socialists acting on behalf of the workers," but not acting with them in such a way that the workers, at all events at first, shall have the slightest say in what is to be done with them or the industry. All the socialised industries will be put "under directing councils on which the trade unions must, of course, receive representation, and entrusting their day-to-day conduct to managing boards consisting each of a few men of undoubted personal drive and technical competence, combined with Socialist conviction." "We cannot," Mr. Cole sapiently remarks, "afford to risk failure and confusion by trying to be too 'democratic' at the very start," though we may, presumably, risk them later on.

Mr. Attlee likes special commissioners

for everything. Each commissioner "must be first and foremost a Socialist," but he "is not to be a solitary autocrat:

> "His job essentially is to work with others, with the local authorities, with the trade unions, with the co-operative societies, and last, but most important, with the local Socialists. . . . I conceive the district commissioner as something more than a public servant. He is the local energiser and interpreter of the will of the Government. He is not impartial. He is a Socialist, and, therefore, in touch with the Socialists in the region, who are his colleagues in his campaign."

Such are some of the proposals seriously made by leading members of the Labour Party, one of whom is the Leader of the Opposition and may become Prime Minister. I have, I think, cited enough from this candid avowal of intentions to show that the danger of a tyranny in England more oppressive than any in Europe to-day, should these people have their way, is not so remote from reality as some of us may suppose.

VII

WHAT is this State which is increasingly encroaching on individual liberty? Theoretically, it is the whole population, but, in reality, it is the small group of persons who, by fair means or foul, have contrived to put themselves in power. It is ludicrous to suppose that Herr Hitler is the sum of the German people when great numbers of them, who have dared to dissent from his opinions, are in concentration camps or exile, in protective custody or in terror of their lives. These dissentients are not all members of one group. They include Jews, Gentiles, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, atheists and agnostics. Einstein and Karl Barth are in exile; Karl Ossietzky was in protective custody, Niemöller is in it still. The word "State" has no meaning when it is applied to the Nazi Government, but even if it had, we should need to be on guard against giving it a sacramental value. There is a school of thought which holds that the State or any widely organised body, such as a Church, may commit, with impunity, acts which if they were committed by an individual, would cause his imprisonment and, perhaps,

his execution. "What scoundrels we should be," said Cavour, "if we did for ourselves things we are prepared to do for Italy." How long can we continue, with safety to ourselves and the community, to believe that what is right for the State is wrong for the individual? The late F. S. Oliver, in the third volume of his work, *The Endless Adventure*, asserted that the State has its own code of morality, a code which is not only different from, but may be, and generally is, opposed to that of the individual. No one, neither a Nazi nor a Bolshevist, will insist that two individuals, when they disagree, are entitled each to club, if he can, the other into acquiescence, even if it be only the acquiescence of a corpse; but a large and, I fear, increasing number of people, impatient or incapable of Christian reason, assert without any qualification that the group of persons which happens to control the community, may justifiably club, persecute, imprison, exile, or kill all those who do not render it immediate and unquestioning obedience. These are not beliefs that a Christian can hold, for the Christian's concern is with the individual soul, not the corporate intention, and he stands inflexibly

convinced that every man has a part in immortality which may not be reduced or deflected by transient political considerations. The dignity of the individual is a prime principle of Christian faith. To take an immortal soul and turn it into a cog in a wheel is, according to Christian ethics, a supreme sin, especially when the wheel is merely revolving in the void. States come and States go. Kingdoms and empires have risen and perished, but the soul of man remains, imperishable, immutable, and divine, and those who tamper with this divinely conceived spirit will tamper with it to their peril. If it is not inviolate, then nothing is inviolate. If it may not spread its wings, then all wings will shrivel.

Those who disbelieve in personal liberty, which is the efflorescence of a gracious spirit, and would substitute for it a system of society in which the life of the individual is closely regulated from the cradle to the grave, the grave being brought prematurely near to the restive and disobedient, will, if they succeed in their design, eventually find themselves faced with the problem of saving their State from stagnation. The history of human society shows that every progressive action began as a thought in

a single head, and was communicated, often at great personal risk, to other minds.

> . . . good, the more
> Communicated, more abundant grows,

Milton says in *Paradise Lost*, and the fewer obstacles there are to its communication, the greater and speedier is the progress made. If, however, the State, having established an absolute authority over the minds and bodies and spirits of its citizens, forbids any communication other than what it considers good, there must inevitably come about a decline in mental and spiritual activity. The community which decrees the slavery of its citizens, decrees its own death. There was no healing in the Pool of Bethesda until *after* the angel had troubled the waters. Rudolf Eucken, whom we may regard as a greater German than Herr Hitler, remarked in one of his works, *Can We Still be Christians?*, "We not only can be, but we must be Christians; only, however, if we recognise that Christianity is a progressive, historical development, still in the making." Some such thought must have been in the mind of Herbert Spencer when, in *First Principles*, he wrote, "Be there or be there

not any other revelation, we have a veritable revelation in science—a continuous disclosure of the established order of the Universe." The Christian and the agnostic are here at one. But how are these disclosures, these progressive developments, to be made if men are forbidden to criticise, discuss, and dissent from authority? Where there is no heresy there is no belief, and where there is no belief there is no life. If we are to save our souls alive, we must allow the dissentient the utmost latitude that is compatible with our existence. It was not a Christian, but a Jew, at whose feet St. Paul was proud to sit, who spoke supreme wisdom in a time of persecution. "Refrain from these men," Gamaliel said to the priests in the Temple who sought to slay Peter and the Apostles. "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." The soul of man is durable. It may suffer much and suffer long, but it will not die; for God made it out of His own spirit, and what He made in that wise, cannot perish.

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