

THE ECONOMIC LEAGUE

NOTES AND COMMENTS**FELLOW-TRAVELLERS**

Since the war the term fellow-traveller has come into common use to denote those who travel with the Communists, praise Communism in practice, extol the virtues of the Soviet system, but who for one reason or another, often lack of moral courage, do not become Communist Party members. Their number is uncertain, but in Britain there are certainly more fellow-travellers than there are actual Party members, who total approximately 40,000. The majority of fellow-travellers are of bourgeois and even aristocratic birth, generally highly educated and of considerable ability.

British fellow-travellers include eminent scientists, university professors, musicians, school teachers, artists—but very few artisans. Their doyen—and perhaps the most remarkable contradiction of them all—is Dr. Hewlett Johnson, Dean of Canterbury. The purpose of these Notes is to probe the minds of fellow-travellers, and to seek an answer to the oft-asked question, why it is that men and women of unquestioned ability and intelligence are fellow-travellers at all.

Nothing New

It is important to remember that the fellow-traveller is not a new, post-war phenomenon. Leading a chameleon-like existence, he passes from one organisation to another created by the Comintern or Cominform to ensnare him with the bird-lime of sloppy sentimentality. The League against Imperialism, founded in 1927; the Relief Committee for Victims of German Fascism; the Friends of Soviet Russia—now the British Soviet Society—and the People's Convention, are but a few of Moscow's creations over the past thirty years. Some people, having been trapped by carefully-worded manifestoes, have travelled a little way and have discovered they had some very odd travelling companions. Among those whose eyes have been opened are Bertrand Russell and Professor Einstein.

The writer of these Notes has studied fellow-travellers for twenty-five years and his experience has shown him that there is no set formula to explain why certain people can swallow, without discomfort but with evident pleasure, large doses of Communism wrapped up in pink cottonwool. The following are well-known fellow-travellers, each identified by a letter, known to the writer, each with a different reason for fellow-travelling.

"A" is a solicitor who has had a moderate success in his profession. He is also a mental exhibitionist. He gets a "kick" out of belonging to organisations that his friends and colleagues regard as disreputable. Once he went

as far as carrying a banner in a May Day procession. He complained afterwards that his colleagues were "very dirty and smelly". He has not repeated the performance.

"B" is an artist of indifferent quality. He thinks his pictures are wonderful but no one else does. With the passing of the years he developed a persecution-complex, until someone told him that his pictures were "anti-capitalist" and would have the recognition they deserved under Communism. That made him an enthusiastic member of the Artists' International.

"C" is a scientist of outstanding ability, and a materialist. He is quite convinced that in Soviet Russia the scientist gets full recognition and is allowed full scope for experiment. His ambition is to be allowed to work in Russia.

"D" is an actor, and a very good one in character parts. He, unlike most fellow-travellers, is a convinced Communist, but fears that Party membership would affect his chances of getting jobs. He drives a very hard bargain, lives in considerable luxury, and is not above playing anti-Communist parts on the stage and screen.

Some More Types

"E" is an eminent churchman. He has great ability and superficial charm. He is apparently devout and sincere in the performance of his ecclesiastical duties. He is also inordinately vain. He has declared, *ad nauseam*, that Communism as in practice in Russia today is true Christianity. By some process of mental blindness and deafness he is able to ignore such little unpleasantnesses as ten million people in slave labour camps, the terror of the secret police, mass deportations in Hungary, and even a succession of bloody purges in the Communist hierarchy. Either he is one of the greatest hypocrites in history or a clear case of a split mind.

"F" is an eminent professional man and as long as he is kept off politics he is a charming and amusing companion. He believes in living very comfortably—a flat in London and a house in the country. In the hard Christmas of the war years he wrote to a friend inviting him to stay, ending with the sentence: "Do come. We have managed to get three turkeys." He is a passionate admirer of anything to do with Soviet Russia and in his mind the Kremlin can do no wrong. He never fails to come to its defence, but there is no indication that he has any real understanding of how the Soviet system works. If he has, he is an arch-hypocrite.

"G" was a scientist of outstanding quality. During his trial for espionage on behalf of Russia he said:—

"I used my Marxian philosophy to establish in my mind two separate compartments, one in which I allowed myself to have friendships and personal relationships, to meet people and be in all personal ways the kind of man I wanted to be and the kind of man which in a personal way I had been before with my friends in or near the Communist Party. I could be, therefore, and was, quite happy with other people without fear of disclosing myself because I knew the other compartment would step in if I approached the danger point."

There is every reason to think that unlike many other fellow-travellers he knew exactly what he was doing, and cultivated deliberately his split mind.

"H" was a senior administrative official of the Supply Department in a Dominion Government. When asked to explain his graduations as a fellow-traveller—which threw him into the Soviet espionage net—he said, explaining how he met a leading member of the group :—

"Those were the days of the Spanish Medical Aid, China Relief, the League against Fascism and War I was what you would call a parlour-pink, I believe, or as some of the more orthodox would call an arm-chair Bolshevik.

"I think shortly after that I did a fair amount of reading, mostly of a left wing nature. I started off with—I think the first book that made a real impression on me was Beverley Nichols' *Cry Havoc*. From there I graduated to *The Merchants of Death*. After that I had some of Laski and some of Strachey. Several times I started to read Marx, but I must admit that it proved a bit too cumbersome. The same with most of the more orthodox Communist writers, with the possible exception of another book that remains very clearly in my mind ; I think it was called *The Coming Struggle with Fascism*, written by Palme Dutt.

"On the basis of that particular kind of reading I gravitated, let us say, more naturally to people holding rather liberal view-points, and thus became quite interested at one time in the Civil Liberties League or Union, I forget what the Montreal one was called. I think the Toronto one was Union and the Montreal one was League, or *vice versa*. I attended some of their meetings. From there I was interested in the Spanish Relief Committee. I am not entirely sure, mind you, of some of the various names, but the rough idea is the same ; and the Chinese Relief Committee; and in the closing stages, before the war finally broke, the League against War and Fascism."

No Common Formula

From these cases it will be seen that there is no common formula for fellow-travelling. Materialism, exhibitionism, thwarted ambitions, real conviction that Communism is sound, inferiority complexes, frustration, vanity, create the conditions out of which the skilful workers of the Communist Party can mould him. Perhaps one of the most astonishing things about all of them is the way in which they can swallow and then regurgitate the most blatant of Cominform propaganda without realising apparently how stupid and artificial their speeches sound. One example will suffice, because there is an interminable and dreary sameness about them :—

"I am here in Prague to give a lecture course at the university. The lectures have been well attended, but yesterday there were fewer than before because earlier in the afternoon there had been a great meeting of staff and students in support of the Five-Power Peace Pact. Anyone who walks the streets of this city and is ready to believe the evidence of his eyes and ears can prove for himself that the people of this country have a passionate desire for peace. Everywhere you go, if you stop and talk to the people, they ask you : 'Do people in Britain understand the danger of war? What are you doing to help the cause of peace?' And what is more, this longing for peace is actively assisted and encouraged by the

Government. In this city you will see no huge posters advertising commercial goods with pictures designed to catch the eye, garish and vulgar. You will see nothing like that. Instead you see painted in huge letters across railway bridges, on streamers across the streets, in shops, offices and hotels such signs as these: 'The USSR is our guarantee of peace'; 'Peace will conquer war'.

"An international music festival is being held here this month. I have been to a Czech concert and I heard songs of peace. I have been to a Russian concert and I heard songs of peace. I have been to a Chinese concert and I heard songs of peace. Everywhere, from Prague to Peking, you will hear songs of peace. In the churches here, as in the English churches, the people pray: 'Give us peace'. Peace is the ardent desire of the whole people. Therefore we in England must not allow ourselves to be deceived. Whatever our political or religious opinions, we must understand that the people of Czechoslovakia, like the peoples of Russia and the other countries which stretch from here to Korea, support wholeheartedly the demand that the heads of the Great Powers should meet so as to settle their differences by negotiation and not by war. In all parts of England peace committees are springing up and working for peace. What is needed now is that all these efforts should be drawn together in the demand for a pact of peace which will lift a great burden from the hearts of the people in all countries and clear the way for a peaceful and happier world."

Anybody who has made even a superficial study of the Communist "peace" campaign will recognise this passage as following devotedly along the lines of the Cominform directive, but the speaker was a British university professor of considerable eminence. Did he really believe what he was saying? If challenged on this point his answer would probably be a highly indignant affirmative, but how a man of high education, great intellect and great world knowledge can make speeches of this kind is hard to understand.

The fellow-traveller must remain an enigma to the ordinary person who is able to see the world picture as a whole, to appreciate the lesson of the Cold War and to realise that Communism in practice means mental and physical slavery. There is one thing that the British fellow-travellers seem to forget—that as the Communists have seized power since 1945 in one European country after another it has been the fellow-traveller who has disappeared quite quickly into the darkness of the political prisons and the wilderness of the penal settlements. Perhaps they do not realise that they are pampered and petted by the Communists only so long as they prove to be useful, but when their usefulness runs out they are ground into the dust with the cynical cruelty of which only the highly-trained Communist is capable.

Issued by the Economic League Ltd.

24, Buckingham Palace Mansions, London, S.W.1,

Subscription Post Free Yearly: U.K. 10s., U.S.A. and Canada \$2.50.

Other Countries, Special Rates

The Algar Printing Co., 118, Lordship Lane, London, S.E.22