CHAPTER 5

THE REALIST CRITIQUE

The Foundations of Realism

FOR reasons explained in a previous chapter, realism enters the field far behind utopianism and by way of reaction from it. The thesis that "justice is the right of the stronger" was, indeed, familiar in the Hellenic world. But it never represented anything more than the protest of an uninfluential minority, puzzled by the divergence between political theory and political practice. Under the supremacy of the Roman Empire, and later of the Catholic Church, the problem could hardly arise; for the political good, first of the empire, then of the church, could be regarded as identical with moral good. It was only with the break-up of the mediaeval system that the divergence between political theory and political practice became acute and challenging. Machiavelli is the first important political realist.

Machiavelli's starting-point is a revolt against the utopianism of current political thought:

> It being my intention to write a thing which shall be useful to him who apprehends it, it appears to me more appropriate to follow up the real truth of a matter than the imagination of it; for many have pictured republics and principalities which in fact have never been seen and known, because how one lives is so far distant from how one ought to live that he who neglects what is done for what ought to be done sooner effects his ruin than his preservation.

The three essential tenets implicit in Machiavelli's doctrine are the foundation-stones of the realist philosophy. In the first place, history is a sequence of cause and effect, whose course can be analysed and understood by intellectual effort, but not (as the utopians believe) directed by "imagination". Secondly, theory does not (as the utopians assume) create practice, but practice theory. In Machiavelli's words, "good counsels, whencesoever they come, are born of the wisdom of the prince, and not the wisdom of the prince from good counsels". Thirdly, politics are not (as the utopians pretend) a function of ethics, but ethics of politics. Men "are kept honest by constraint". Machiavelli recognised the importance of morality, but thought that there could be no effective morality where there was no effective authority. Morality is the product of power.[1]

The extraordinary vigour and vitality of Machiavelli's challenge to orthodoxy may be attested by the fact that, more than four centuries after he wrote, the most conclusive way of discrediting a political opponent is still to describe him as a disciple of Machiavelli.[2] Bacon was one of the first to praise him for "saying openly and without hypocrisy what men are in the habit of doing, not what they ought to do".[3] Henceforth, no political

[1] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chs. 15 and 23 (Engl. transl., Everyman's Library, pp. 121, 193).

[2] Two curious recent illustrations may be cited. In the chapter of the *Survey of International Affairs* dealing with the Nazi revolution, Professor Toynbee declares that National Socialism is the "fulfilment of ideals . . . formulated . . . by Machiavelli"; and he reiterates this view in two futher passages of considerable length in the same chapter (*Survey of International Affairs, 1934*, pp. 111, 117-19, 126-8). In the trial of Zinoviev, Kamenev and others in Moscow in August 1936, the Public Prosecutor, Vyshinsky, quoted a passage from Kamenev's writings in which Machiavelli had been praised as "a master of political aphorism and a brilliant dialectician", and accused Kamenev of having "adopted the rules of Machiavelli" and "developed them to the utmost point of unscrupulousness and immorality" (*The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Centre*, pp. 138-9).

[3] Bacon, *On the Advancement of Learning*, vii. ch. 2.

thinker could ignore him. In France Bodin, in England Hobbes, in the Netherlands Spinoza, professed to find a compromise between the new doctrine and the conception of a "law of nature" constituting a supreme ethical standard. But all three were in substance realists; and the age of Newton for the first time conceived the possibility of a physical science of politics.[1] The work of Bodin and Hobbes, writes Professor Laski, was "to separate ethics from politics, and to complete by theoretical means the division which Machiavelli had effected on practical grounds".[2] "Before the names of Just and Unjust can have place", said Hobbes, "there must be some coercive power."[3] Spinoza believed that practical statesmen had contributed more to the understanding of politics than men of theory "and, above all, theologians"; for "they have put themselves to the school of experience, and have therefore taught nothing which does not bear upon our practical needs".[4] In anticipation of Hegel, Spinoza declares that "every man does what he does according to the laws of his nature and to the highest right of nature".[5] The way is thus opened for determinism; and ethics become, in the last analysis, the study of reality.

Modern realism differs, however, in one important respect from that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Both utopianism and realism accepted and incorporated in their philosophies the eighteenth-century belief in progress, with the curious and somewhat paradoxical result that realism became in appearance more "progressive" than utopianism. Utopianism grafted its

[1] In Hobbes's scheme, "there was in theory no place for any new force or principle beyond the laws of motion found at the beginning; there were merely complex cases of mechanical causation" (Sabine, *History of Political Thought*, p. 458).

[2] Introduction to *A Defence of Liberty against Tyrants* (*Vindiciae contre Tyrannos*), ed. Laski, p. 45.

[3] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. xv. [4] Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus*, i. pp. 2-3.

[5] *Ibid.* Introduction.

belief in progress on to its belief in an absolute ethical standard, which remained *ex hypothesi* static. Realism, having no such sheet-anchor, became more and more dynamic and relativist. Progress became part of the inner essence of the historical process ; and mankind was moving forward towards a goal which was left undefined, or was differently defined by different philosophers. The " historical school " of realists had its home in Germany, and its development is traced through the great names of Hegel and Marx. But no country in Western Europe, and no branch of thought, was immune from its influence in the middle and later years of the nineteenth century ; and this development, while it has freed realism from the pessimistic colouring imparted to it by thinkers like Machiavelli and Hobbes, has thrown its determinist character into stronger relief.

The idea of causation in history is as old as the writing of history itself. But so long as the belief prevailed that human affairs were subject to the continuous supervision and occasional intervention of a Divine Providence, no philosophy of history based on a regular relationship of cause and effect was likely to be evolved. The substitution of reason for Divine Providence enabled Hegel to produce, for the first time, a philosophy based on the conception of a rational historical process. Hegel, while assuming a regular and orderly process, was content to find its directing force in a metaphysical abstraction — the *Zeitgeist*. But once the historical conception of reality had established itself, it was a short step to substitute for the abstract *Zeitgeist* some concrete material force. The economic interpretation of history was not invented, but developed and popularised, by Marx. About the same time Buckle propounded a geographical interpretation of history which convinced him that human affairs were " permeated by one glorious principle of universal and undeviating regularity " ; [1] and this has been revived

[1] The concluding words of Buckle's *History of Civilisation*.

recently in the form of the new science of *Geopolitik*, whose inventor describes geography as " a political categorical imperative ".[1] Spengler believed that events were determined by quasi-biological laws governing the growth and decline of civilisations. More eclectic thinkers interpret history as the product of a variety of material factors, and the policy of a group or nation as a reflexion of all the material factors which make up the group or national interest. " Foreign policies ", said Mr. Hughes during his tenure of office as American Secretary of State, " are not built upon abstractions. They are the result of national interest arising from some immediate exigency or standing out vividly in historical perspective."[2] Any such interpretation of reality, whether in terms of a *Zeitgeist*, or of economics or geography, or of " historical perspective ", is in its last analysis deterministic. Marx (though, having a programme of action, he could not be a rigid and consistent determinist) believed in " tendencies which work out with an iron necessity towards an inevitable goal ".[3] " Politics ", wrote Lenin, " have their own objective logic independent of the prescriptions of this or that individual or party."[4] In January 1918, he described his belief in the coming socialist revolutions in Europe as " a scientific prediction ".[5]

On the " scientific " hypothesis of the realists, reality is thus identified with the whole course of historical evolution, whose laws it is the business of the philosopher to investigate and reveal. There can be no reality outside the historical process. " To conceive of history as evolu-

[1] Kjellen, *Der Staat als Lebensform*, p. 81. Compare the opening words of Crowe's famous memorandum on British foreign policy: " The general character of England's foreign policy is determined by the immutable conditions of her geographical situation " (*British Documents on the Origin of the War*, ed. Gooch and Temperley, iii. p. 397).

[2] *International Conciliation*, No. 194, January 1924, p. 3.

[3] Marx, *Capital*, Preface to 1st ed. (Engl. transl., Everyman's Library, p. 863).

[4] Lenin *Works* (2nd Russian ed.), x. p. 207

[5] *Ibid.* xxii. p. 194.

tion and progress ", writes Croce, " implies accepting it as necessary in all its parts, and therefore denying validity to judgments on it."[1] Condemnation of the past on ethical grounds has no meaning; for in Hegel's words, " philosophy transfigures the real which appears unjust into the rational ".[2] What was, is right. History cannot be judged except by historical standards. It is significant that our historical judgments, except those relating to a past which we can ourselves remember as the present, always appear to start from the presupposition that things could not have turned out otherwise than they did. It is recorded that Venizelos, on reading in Mr. Fisher's *History of Europe* that the Greek invasion of Asia Minor in 1919 was a mistake, smiled ironically and said : " Every enterprise that does not succeed is a mistake ".[3] If Wat Tyler's rebellion had succeeded, he would be an English national hero. If the American War of Independence had ended in disaster, the Founding Fathers of the United States would be briefly recorded in history as a gang of turbulent and unscrupulous fanatics. Nothing succeeds like success. " World history ", in the famous phrase which Hegel borrowed from Schiller, " is the world court ". The popular paraphrase " Might is Right " is misleading only if we attach too restricted a meaning to the word " Might ". History creates rights, and therefore right. The doctrine of the survival of the fittest proves that the survivor was, in fact, the fittest to survive. Marx does not seem to have maintained that the victory of the proletariat was just in any other sense than that it was historically inevitable. Lukacs was a consistent, though perhaps indiscreet, Marxist when he based the " right " of the proletariat on its " historical mission ".[4] Herr Hitler believes in the historical mission of the German people.

[1] Croce, *Storia della storiografia italiana*, i. p. 26.
[2] Hegel, *Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (Lasson's ed.), p. 55.
[3] *Conciliation Internationale*, No. 5-6, 1937, p. 520.
[4] Lukacs, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*, p. 215.

The Realist Critique

The Relativity of Thought

The outstanding achievement of modern realism, however, has been to reveal, not merely the determinist aspects of the historical process, but the relative and pragmatic character of thought itself. In the last fifty years, thanks mainly though not wholly to the influence of Marx, the principles of the historical school have been applied to the analysis of thought; and the foundations of a new science have been laid, principally by German thinkers, under the name of the "sociology of knowledge". The realist has thus been enabled to demonstrate that the intellectual theories and ethical standards of utopianism, far from being the expression of absolute and *a priori* principles, are historically conditioned, being both products of circumstances and interests and weapons framed for the furtherance of interests. "Ethical notions", as Mr Bertrand Russell has remarked, "are very seldom a cause, but almost always an effect, a means of claiming universal legislative authority for our own preferences, not, as we fondly imagine, the actual ground of those preferences."[1] This is by far the most formidable attack which utopianism has to face; for here the very foundations of its belief are undermined by the realist critique.

In a general way, the relativity of thought has long been recognised. As early as the seventeenth century Bishop Burnet expounded the relativist view as cogently, if not as pungently, as Marx:

> As to the late Civil Wars, 'tis pretty well known what notions of government went current in those days. When monarchy was to be subverted we knew what was necessary to justify the fact; and then, because it was convenient for the purpose, it was undoubtedly true in the nature of things that government had its original from the people, and the prince was only their trustee. . . . But afterwards, when monarchy took its

[1] *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1915–16, p. 302.

> place again . . . another notion of government came into fashion. Then government had its original entirely from God, and the prince was accountable to none but Him. . . . And now, upon another turn of things, when people have a liberty to speak out, a new set of notions is advanced; now passive obedience is all a mistake, and instead of being a duty to suffer oppression, 'tis a glorious act to resist it: and instead of leaving injuries to be redressed by God, we have a natural right to relieve ourselves.[1]

In modern times, the recognition of this phenomenon has become fairly general. "Belief, and to speak fairly, honest belief," wrote Dicey of the divisions of opinion in the nineteenth century about slavery, "was to a great extent the result not of argument, not even of direct self-interest, but of circumstances. . . . Circumstances are the creators of most men's opinions."[2] Marx narrowed down this somewhat vague conception, declaring that all thought was conditioned by the economic interest and social status of the thinker. This view was perhaps unduly restrictive. In particular Marx, who denied the existence of "national" interests, underestimated the potency of nationalism as a force conditioning the thought of the individual. But the peculiar concentration which he applied to the principle served to popularise it and drive it home. The relativity of thought to the interests and circumstances of the thinker has been far more extensively recognised and understood since Marx wrote.

The principle has an extremely wide field of application. It has become a commonplace to say that theories do not mould the course of events, but are invented to explain them. "Empire precedes imperialism."[3] Eighteenth-century England "put into practice the policy of *laissez-faire* before it found a justification, or even an

[1] Burnet, *Essay upon Government*, p. 10.
[2] Dicey, *Law and Opinion* (1905 ed.), p. 27.
[3] J. A. Hobson, *Free Thought in the Social Sciences*, p. 190.

apparent justification, in the new doctrine" ;[1] and "the virtual break-up of *laissez-faire* as a body of doctrine . . . has followed, and not preceded, the decline of *laissez-faire* in the real world".[2] The so-called theory of "socialism in a single country" promulgated in Soviet Russia since 1924 is manifestly a product of the failure of Soviet régimes to establish themselves in other countries.

But the development of abstract theory is often influenced by events which have no essential connexion with it at all.

> In the story of political thought [writes a modern social thinker] events have been no less potent than arguments. The failure and success of institutions, the victories and defeats of countries identified with certain principles have repeatedly brought new strength and resolution to the adherents or opponents of these principles as the case might be in all lands. . . . Philosophy as it exists on earth is the work of philosophers who, authority tells us, suffer as much from toothache as other mortals, and are, like others, open to the impression of near and striking events and to the seductions of intellectual fashion.[3]

Germany's dramatic rise to power in the 'sixties and 'seventies of last century was impressive enough to make the leading British philosophers of the next generation — Caird, T. H. Green, Bosanquet, MacTaggart — ardent Hegelians. Thereafter, the Kaiser's telegram to Kruger and the German naval programme spread the conviction among British thinkers that Hegel was a less good philosopher than had been supposed ; and since 1914 no British philosopher of repute has ventured to sail under the Hegelian flag. After 1870, Stubbs and Freeman

[1] Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* (Engl. transl.), p. 104.

[2] M. Dobb, *Political Economy and Capitalism*, p. 188.

[3] L. T. Hobhouse, *The Unity of Western Civilisation*, ed. F. S. Marvin (3rd ed), pp. 177-8.

put early English history on a sound Teutonic basis, while even in France Fustel de Coulanges had an uphill struggle to defend the Latin origins of French civilisation. During the past thirty years, English historians have been furtively engaged in making the Teutonic origins of England as inconspicuous as possible.

Nor is it only professional thinkers who are subject to such influences. Popular opinion is not less markedly dominated by them. The frivolity and immorality of French life was an established dogma in nineteenth-century Britain, which still remembered Napoleon. "When I was young," wrote Mr. Bertrand Russell recently, "the French ate frogs and were called 'froggies', but they apparently abandoned this practice when we concluded our *entente* with them in 1904 — at any rate, I have never heard it mentioned since that date." [1] Some years later, "the gallant little Jap" of 1905 underwent a converse metamorphosis into "the Prussian of the East". In the nineteenth century, it was a commonplace of British opinion that Germans were efficient and enlightened, and Russians backward and barbarous. About 1910, it was ascertained that Germans (who turned out to be mostly Prussians) were coarse, brutal and narrow-minded, and that Russians had a Slav soul. The vogue of Russian literature in Great Britain, which set in about the same time, was a direct outcome of the political *rapprochement* with Russia. The vogue of Marxism in Great Britain and France, which began on a modest scale after the success of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, has rapidly gathered momentum, particularly among intellectuals, since 1934, when it was discovered that Soviet Russia was a potential military ally against Germany. It is symptomatic that most people, when challenged, will indignantly deny that they form their opinions in this way; for as Acton long ago observed, "few discoveries are more irritating than those which

[1] Bertrand Russell, *Which Way Peace?* p. 158.

expose the pedigree of ideas ".[1] The conditioning of thought is necessarily a subconcious process.

The Adjustment of Thought to Purpose

Thought is not merely relative to the circumstances and interests of the thinker: it is also pragmatic in the sense that it is directed to the fulfilment of his purposes. For the realist, as a witty writer has put it, truth is " no more than the perception of discordant experience pragmatically adjusted for a particular purpose and for the time being ".[2] The purposeful character of thought has been discussed in a previous chapter; and a few examples will suffice here to illustrate the importance of this phenomenon in international politics.

Theories designed to discredit an enemy or potential enemy are one of the commonest forms of purposeful thinking. To depict one's enemies or one's prospective victims as inferior beings in the sight of God has been a familiar technique at any rate since the days of the Old Testament. Racial theories, ancient and modern, belong to this category; for the rule of one people or class over another is always justified by a belief in the mental and moral inferiority of the ruled. In such theories, sexual abnormality and sexual offences are commonly imputed to the discredited race or group. Sexual depravity is imputed by the white American to the negro; by the white South African to the Kaffir; by the Anglo-Indian to the Hindu; and by the Nazi German to the Jew. The most popular and most absurd of the charges levelled against the Bolsheviks in the early days of the Russian revolution was that they advocated sexual promiscuity. Atrocity stories, among which offences of a sexual character predominate, are the familiar product of every war. On the eve of their invasion of Abyssinia, the Italians

[1] Acton, *History of Freedom*, p. 62.
[2] Carl Becker, *Yale Review*, xxvii, p. 461.

issued an official Green Book of Abyssinian atrocities. " The Italian Government ", as the Abyssinian delegate at Geneva correctly observed, " having resolved to conquer and destroy Ethiopia, begins by giving Ethiopia a bad name."[1]

But the phenomenon also appears in less crude forms which sometimes enable it to escape detection. The point was well made by Crowe in a Foreign Office minute of March 1908:

> The German (formerly Prussian) Government has always been most remarkable for the pains it takes to create a feeling of intense and holy hatred against a country with which it contemplates the possibility of war. It is undoubtedly in this way that the frantic hatred of England as a monster of personified selfishness and greed and absolute want of conscience, which now animates Germany, has been nursed and fed.[2]

The diagnosis is accurate and penetrating. But it is strange that so acute a mind as Crowe's should not have perceived that he himself was at this time performing, for the limited audience of statesmen and officials to which he had access, precisely the same operation of which he accused the German Government; for a perusal of his memoranda and minutes of the period reveals an able, but transparent, attempt to " create a feeling of intense and holy hatred " against his own country's future enemy — a curious instance of our promptness to detect the conditioned or purposeful character of other people's thought, while assuming that our own is wholly objective. Conspicuous recent instances of this moral denigration of potential enemies have been Mr. Churchill's vigorous denunciations, in the first post-War years, of the wickedness of Bolsheviks and, since 1934, of the wickedness of National Socialists. In both cases, the realist will have

[1] *League of Nations: Official Journal*, November, 1935, p. 1140.

[2] *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, ed. Gooch and Temperley, 131.

no difficulty in recognising the pragmatic, though no doubt unconscious, adjustment of Mr. Churchill's judgments to his policy of the moment.

The converse of this propagation of theories designed to throw moral discredit on an enemy is the propagation of theories reflecting moral credit on oneself and one's own policies. Bismarck records the remark made to him by Walewski, the French Foreign Minister, in 1857, that it was the business of a diplomat to cloak the interests of his country in the language of universal justice. More recently, Mr. Churchill told the House of Commons that " there must be a moral basis for British rearmament and foreign policy ".[1] It is rare, however, for modern statesmen to express themselves with this frankness ; and Mr. Churchill's failure to make a lasting appeal to his countrymen may perhaps be explained by his readiness to assume that a " moral basis " is the coping-stone rather than the foundation of policy. In contemporary British and American politics, the most powerful influence has been wielded by those more utopian statesmen who are sincerely convinced that policy is deduced from ethical principles, not ethical principles from policy. The realist is nevertheless obliged to uncover the hollowness of this conviction. " The right ", said Woodrow Wilson to the United States Congress in 1917, " is more precious than peace." [2] " Peace comes before all," said Briand ten years later to the League of Nations Assembly, " peace comes even before justice." [3] Considered as ethical principles, both these contradictory pronouncements are tenable and could muster respectable support. Are we therefore to believe that we are dealing with a clash of ethical standards, and that if Wilson's and Briand's policies differed it was because they deduced them from opposite principles ? No serious student of

[1] House of Commons, March 14, 1938 : *Official Report*, col. 95-99.

[2] *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson : War and Peace*, ed. R. S. Baker, i. p. 16.

[3] *League of Nations : Eighth Assembly*, p. 83.

politics will entertain this belief. The most cursory examination shews that the principles were deduced from the policies, not the policies from the principles. In 1917, Wilson had decided on the policy of war with Germany, and he proceeded to clothe that policy in the appropriate garment of righteousness. In 1927 Briand was fearful of attempts made in the name of justice to disturb a peace settlement favourable to France; and he had no more difficulty than Wilson in finding the moral phraseology which fitted his policy. It would be irrelevant to discuss this supposed difference of principles on ethical grounds. The principles merely reflected different national policies framed to meet different conditions.

The double process of morally discrediting the policy of a potential enemy and morally justifying one's own may be abundantly illustrated from the post-War discussions of disarmament. The experience during the War of the Anglo-Saxon Powers, whose naval predominance had been threatened by the submarine, provided an ample opportunity of denouncing the immorality of this new weapon. "Civilisation demands", wrote the naval adviser to the American Delegation at the Peace Conference, "that naval warfare be placed on a higher plane" by the abolition of the submarine.[1] Unfortunately the submarine was regarded as a convenient weapon by the weaker French, Italian and Japanese navies; and this particular demand of civilisation could not therefore be complied with. A distinction of a more sweeping character was established by Lord Cecil in a speech to the General Council of the League of Nations Union in 1922:

[1] R. S. Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, iii. p. 120. There is an amusing nineteenth-century parallel. "Privateering", wrote Queen Victoria at the time of the Conference of Paris in 1856, "is a kind of Piracy which disgraces our civilisation; its abolition throughout the whole world would be a great step in advance." We are not surprised to read that "the privateer was then, like the submarine in modern times, the weapon of the weaker naval Power" (Sir William Malkin, *British Year Book of International Law*, viii. pp. 6, 30).

> The general peace of the world will not be materially secured merely by naval disarmament. . . . If all the maritime Powers were to disarm, or drastically limit their armaments, I am not at all sure that would not increase the danger of war rather than decrease it, because the naval arm is mainly defensive ; the offensive must be to a large extent the military weapon.[1]

The inspiration of regarding one's own vital armaments as defensive and beneficent and those of other nations as offensive and wicked was a particularly fruitful one. Exactly ten years later, three commissions of the Disarmament Conference spent many weeks in a vain endeavour to classify armaments as " offensive " and " defensive ". Delegates of all nations shewed extraordinary ingenuity in devising arguments, supposedly based on pure objective theory, to prove that the armaments on which they chiefly relied were defensive, while those of potential rivals were essentially offensive. Similar attitudes have been taken up in regard to economic " armaments ". In the latter part of the nineteenth century — and in a lesser degree down to 1931 — protective tariffs were commonly regarded in Great Britain as immoral. Since 1931, straight tariffs have regained their innocence, but barter agreements, industrial (though not agricultural) quotas, exchange controls and other weapons employed by Continental states are still tainted with immorality. Down to 1930, successive revisions of the United States tariff had almost invariably been upward ; and American economists, in other respects staunch upholders of *laissez-faire*, had almost invariably treated tariffs as legitimate and laudable. But the change in the position of the United States from a debtor to a creditor Power, combined with

[1] Published as League of Nations Union Pamphlet No. 76, p. 8. The very word " militarism " conveys to most English readers the same connotation of the peculiar wickedness of armies. It was left to an American historian, Dr. W. L. Langer, to coin the counterpart " navalism ", which has won significantly little acceptance.

the reversal of British economic policy, altered the picture ; and the reduction of tariff barriers is identified by the present American Secretary of State with the cause of international morality.

National Interest and the Universal Good

The realist should not, however, linger over the infliction of these pin-pricks through chinks in the utopian defences. His task is to bring down the whole cardboard structure of post-War utopian thought by exposing the hollowness of the material out of which it is built. The weapon of the relativity of thought must be used to demolish the utopian concept of a fixed and absolute standard by which policies and actions can be judged. If theories are revealed as a reflexion of practice and principles of political needs, this discovery will apply to the fundamental theories and principles of the utopian creed, and not least to the doctrine of the harmony of interests which is its essential postulate.

It will not be difficult to shew that the utopian, when he preaches the doctrine of the harmony of interests, is innocently and unconsciously adopting Walewski's maxim, and clothing his own interest in the guise of a universal interest for the purpose of imposing it on the rest of the world. " Men come easily to believe that arrangements agreeable to themselves are beneficial to others ", as Dicey observed ;[1] and theories of the public good, which turn out on inspection to be an elegant disguise for some particular interest, are as common in international as in national affairs. The utopian, however eager he may be to establish an absolute standard, does not argue that it is the duty of his country, in conformity with that standard, to put the interest of the world at large before its own interest ; for that would be contrary to his theory that the interest of all coincides with the interest of each. He

[1] Dicey, *Law and Opinion in England* (2nd ed.), pp. 14-15.

argues that what is best for the world is best for his country, and then reverses the argument to read that what is best for his country is best for the world, the two propositions being, from the utopian standpoint, identical; and this unconscious cynicism of the contemporary utopian has proved a far more effective diplomatic weapon than the deliberate and self-conscious cynicism of a Walewski or a Bismarck. British writers of the past half-century have been particularly eloquent supporters of the theory that the maintenance of British supremacy is the performance of a duty to mankind. "If Great Britain has turned itself into a coal-shed and blacksmith's forge", remarked *The Times* ingenuously in 1885, "it is for the behoof of mankind as well as its own."[1] The following extract is typical of a dozen which might be culled from memoirs of public men of the period:

> I have but one great object in this world, and that is to maintain the greatness of the Empire. But apart from my John Bull sentiment upon the point, I firmly believe that in doing so I work in the cause of Christianity, of peace, of civilisation, and the happiness of the human race generally.[2]

"I contend that we are the first race in the world," wrote Cecil Rhodes, "and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race."[3] In 1891, the most popular and brilliant journalist of the day, W. T. Stead, founded the *Review of Reviews*. "We believe in God, in England and in Humanity", ran the editorial manifesto in its opening number. "The English-speaking race is one of the chief of God's chosen agents for executing coming improvements in the lot of mankind."[4] An Oxford professor was convinced in 1912 that the secret of Britain's

[1] *The Times*, August 27, 1885.
[2] Maurice and Arthur, *The Life of Lord Wolseley*, p. 314.
[3] W. T. Stead, *The Last Will and Testament of Cecil J. Rhodes*, p. 58.
[4] *Review of Reviews*, January 15, 1891.

history was that " in fighting for her own independence she has been fighting for the freedom of Europe, and that the service thus rendered to Europe and to mankind has carried with it the possibility of that larger service to which we give the name of Empire ".[1]

The War carried this conviction to a pitch of emotional frenzy. A bare catalogue, culled from the speeches of British statesmen, of the services which British belligerency was rendering to humanity would fill many pages. In 1917, Balfour told the New York Chamber of Commerce that " since August, 1914, the fight has been for the highest spiritual advantages of mankind, without a petty thought or ambition ".[2] The Peace Conference and its sequel temporarily discredited these professions and threw some passing doubt on the belief in British supremacy as one of the moral assets of mankind. But the period of disillusionment and modesty was short. Moments of international tension, and especially moments when the possibility of war appears on the horizon, always stimulate this identification of national interest with morality. At the height of the Abyssinian crisis, the Archbishop of Canterbury admonished the French public through an interview in a Paris newspaper :

> We are animated by moral and spiritual considerations. I do not think I am departing from my role by contributing towards the clearing up of this misunderstanding. . . .
>
> It is . . . no egoist interest that is driving us forward, and no consideration of interest should keep you behind.[3]

In the following year, Professor Toynbee was once more able to discover that the security of the British Empire " was also the supreme interest of the whole world ".[4] In

[1] Spencer Wilkinson, *Government and the War*, p. 116.
[2] Quoted in Beard, *The Rise of American Civilisation*, ii. p. 646.
[3] Quoted in *Manchester Guardian*, October 18, 1935.
[4] Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs, 1935*, i p. 46.

1937, Lord Cecil spoke to the General Council of the League of Nations Union of " our duty to our country, to our Empire and to humanity at large ", and quoted :

> Not once nor twice in our rough island story
> The path of duty is the way to glory.[1]

An Englishman, as Mr. Bernard Shaw remarks in *The Man of Destiny*, " never forgets that the nation which lets its duty get on to the opposite side to its interest is lost ". It is not surprising that an American critic should recently have described the British as " Jesuits lost to the theological but gained for the political realm ",[2] or that a former Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs should have commented, long before these recent manifestations, on " that precious gift bestowed upon the British people — the possession of writers and clergymen able in perfect good faith to advance the highest moral reasons for the most concrete diplomatic action, with inevitable moral profit to England ".[3]

In recent times, the same phenomenon has become endemic in the United States. The story how McKinley prayed for divine guidance and decided to annex the Philippines is a classic of modern American history ; and this annexation was the occasion of a popular outburst of moral self-approval hitherto more familiar in the foreign policy of Great Britain than of the United States. Theodore Roosevelt, who believed more firmly than any previous American President in the doctrine *L'état, c'est moi*, carried the process a step further. The following curious dialogue occurred in his cross-examination during a libel action brought against him in 1915 by a Tammany leader :

> *Query :* How did you know that substantial justice was done ?

[1] *Headway*, November 1937.
[2] Carl Becker, *Yale Review*, xxvii. p. 452.
[3] Count Sforza, *Foreign Affairs*, October 1927, p. 67.

ROOSEVELT: Because I did it, because . . . I was doing my best.

Query: You mean to say that, when you do a thing, thereby substantial justice is done.

ROOSEVELT: I do. When I do a thing, I do it so as to do substantial justice. I mean just that.[1]

Woodrow Wilson was less naively egoistical, but more profoundly confident of the identity of American policy and universal justice. After the bombardment of Vera Cruz in 1914, he assured the world that "the United States had gone down to Mexico to serve mankind".[2] During the War, he advised American naval cadets "not only always to think first of America, but always, also, to think first of humanity" — a feat rendered slightly less difficult by his explanation that the United States had been "founded for the benefit of humanity".[3] Shortly before the entry of the United States into the War, in an address to the Senate on war aims, he stated the identification still more categorically: "These are American principles, American policies. . . . They are the principles of mankind and must prevail."[4]

It will be observed that utterances of this character proceed almost exclusively from Anglo-Saxon statesmen and writers. It is true that when a prominent National Socialist asserts that "anything that benefits the German people is right, anything that harms the German people is wrong",[5] he is merely propounding the same identification of national interest with universal right which has already been established for English-speaking countries by Wilson, Professor Toynbee, Lord Cecil and many others. But when the claim is translated into German or any other foreign language, the note seems forced, and

[1] Quoted in H. F. Pringle, *Theodore Roosevelt*, p. 318.

[2] *Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson: The New Democracy*, ed. R. S. Baker, i. p. 104.

[3] *Ibid.* i. pp. 318-19.

[4] *Ibid.* ii. p. 414.

[5] Quoted in Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs, 1936*, p 319.

the identification unconvincing, even to the peoples concerned. Two explanations are commonly given of this curious discrepancy. The first explanation, which is popular in English-speaking countries, is that the policies of the English-speaking nations are in fact more virtuous and disinterested than those of Continental states, so that Wilson and Professor Toynbee and Lord Cecil are, broadly speaking, right when they identify the American and British national interests with the interest of mankind. The second explanation, which is popular in Continental countries, is that the English-speaking peoples are past masters in the art of concealing their selfish national interests in the guise of the general good, and that this kind of hypocrisy is a special and characteristic peculiarity of the Anglo-Saxon mind.

It seems unnecessary to accept either of these heroic attempts to cut the knot. The solution is a simple one. Theories of social morality are always the product of a dominant group which identifies itself with the community as a whole, and which possesses facilities denied to subordinate groups or individuals for imposing its view of life on the community. Theories of international morality are, for the same reason and in virtue of the same process, the product of dominant nations or groups of nations. For the past hundred years, and more especially since 1918, the English-speaking peoples have formed the dominant group in the world; and current theories of international morality have been designed to perpetuate their supremacy and expressed in the idiom peculiar to them. France, retaining something of her eighteenth-century tradition and restored to a position of dominance for a short period after 1918, has played a minor part in the creation of current international morality, mainly through her insistence on the role of law in the moral order. Germany, never a dominant Power and reduced to helplessness after 1918, has remained for these reasons outside the charmed circle of creators of international

morality. Both the view that the English-speaking peoples are monopolists of international morality and the view that they are consummate international hypocrites may be reduced to the plain fact the current canons of international virtue have, by a natural and inevitable process, been mainly created by them.

The Realist Critique of the Harmony of Interests

The doctrine of the harmony of interests yields readily to analysis in terms of this principle. It is the natural assumption of a prosperous and privileged class, whose members have a dominant voice in the community and are therefore naturally prone to identify its interest with their own. In virtue of this identification, any assailant of the interests of the dominant group is made to incur the odium of assailing the alleged common interest of the whole community, and is told that in making this assault he is attacking his own higher interests. The doctrine of the harmony of interests thus serves as an ingenious moral device invoked, in perfect sincerity, by privileged groups in order to justify and maintain their dominant position. But a further point requires notice. The supremacy within the community of the privileged group may be, and often is, so overwhelming that there is, in fact, a sense in which its interests are those of the community, since its well-being necessarily carries with it some measure of well-being for other members of the community, and its collapse would entail the collapse of the community as a whole. In so far, therefore, as the alleged natural harmony of interests has any reality, it is created by the overwhelming power of the privileged group, and is an excellent illustration of the Machiavellian maxim that morality is the product of power. A few examples will make this analysis of the doctrine of the harmony of interests clear.

In the nineteenth century, the British manufacturer or merchant, having discovered that *laissez-faire* promoted

his own prosperity, was sincerely convinced that it also promoted British prosperity as a whole. Nor was this alleged harmony of interests between himself and the community entirely fictitious. The predominance of the manufacturer and the merchant was so overwhelming that there was a sense in which an identity between their prosperity and British prosperity as a whole could be correctly asserted. From this it was only a short step to argue that a worker on strike, in damaging the prosperity of the British manufacturer, was damaging British prosperity as a whole, and thereby damaging his own, so that he could be plausibly denounced by the predecessors of Professor Toynbee as immoral and by the predecessors of Professor Zimmern as muddle-headed. Moreover, there was a sense in which this argument was perfectly correct. Nevertheless, the doctrine of the harmony of interests and of solidarity between the classes must have seemed a bitter mockery to the under-privileged worker, whose inferior status and insignificant stake in " British prosperity " were consecrated by it ; and presently he was strong enough to force the abandonment of *laissez-faire* and the substitution for it of the " social service state ", which implicitly denies the natural harmony of interests and sets out to create a new harmony by artificial means.

The same analysis may be applied in international relations. British nineteenth-century statesmen, having discovered that free trade promoted British prosperity, were sincerely convinced that, in doing so, it also promoted the prosperity of the world as a whole. British predominance in world trade was at that time so overwhelming that there was a certain undeniable harmony between British interests and the interests of the world. British prosperity flowed over into other countries, and a British economic collapse would have meant world-wide ruin. British free traders could and did argue that protectionist countries were not only egotistically damaging the prosperity of the world as a whole, but were stupidly

damaging their own, so that their behaviour was both immoral and muddle-headed. In British eyes, it was irrefutably proved that international trade was a single whole, and flourished or slumped together. Nevertheless, this alleged international harmony of interests seemed a mockery to those under-privileged nations whose inferior status and insignificant stake in international trade were consecrated by it. The revolt against it destroyed that overwhelming British preponderance which had provided a plausible basis for the theory. Economically, Great Britain in the nineteenth century was dominant enough to make a bold bid to impose on the world her own conception of international economic morality. Now that competition of all against all has replaced the domination of the world market by a single Power, conceptions of international economic morality have necessarily become chaotic.

Politically, the alleged community of interest in the maintenance of peace, whose ambiguous character has already been discussed, is capitalised in the same way by a dominant nation or group of nations. Just as the ruling class in a community prays for domestic peace, which guarantees its own security and predominance, and denounces class-war, which might threaten them, so international peace becomes a special vested interest of predominant Powers. In the past, Roman and British imperialism were commended to the world in the guise of the *pax Romana* and the *pax Britannica*. To-day, when no single Power is strong enough to dominate the world, and supremacy is vested in a group of nations, slogans like "collective security" and "resistance to aggression" serve the same purpose of proclaiming an identity of interest between the dominant group and the world as a whole in the maintenance of peace. Moreover, as in the examples we have just considered, so long as the supremacy of the dominant group is sufficiently great, there is a sense in which this identity of interests exists.

" England ", wrote a German professor shortly after the War, " is the solitary Power with a national programme which, while egotistic through and through, at the same time promises to the world something which the world passionately desires : order, progress and eternal peace." [1] Even to-day, if Great Britain and France went to war with Germany and Italy, the defeat of Great Britain and France by Germany and Italy would produce a far more tremendous upheaval throughout the world than the defeat of Germany and Italy by Great Britain and France ; and the sympathies of all those countries which felt that they had something to lose would, other things being equal, be instinctively ranged on the Franco-British side. When Mr. Churchill declares that " the fortunes of the British Empire and its glory are inseparably interwoven with the fortunes of the world ",[2] this statement has precisely the same foundation in fact as the statement that the prosperity of British manufacturers in the nineteenth century was inseparably interwoven with British prosperity as a whole. Moreover, the purpose of the statements is precisely the same, namely to establish the principle that the defence of the British Empire, or the prosperity of the British manufacturer, is a matter of common interest to the whole community, and that anyone who attacks it is therefore either immoral or muddle-headed. It is a familiar tactic of the privileged to throw moral discredit on the under-privileged by depicting them as disturbers of the peace ; and this tactic is as readily applied internationally as within the national community. " International law and order ", writes Professor Toynbee of a recent crisis, " were in the true interests of the whole of mankind . . . whereas the desire to perpetuate the reign of violence in international affairs was an anti-social desire which was not even in the ultimate interests of the citizens of the handful of states that officially professed this benighted

[1] Dibelius, *England*, p. 109.
[2] Winston Churchill, *Arms and the Covenant*, p. 272.

and anachronistic creed." [1] This is precisely the argument, compounded of platitude and falsehood in about equal parts, which did duty in every strike in the early days of the British and American Labour movements. It was common form for employers, supported by the whole capitalist press, to denounce the " anti-social " attitude of trade union leaders, to accuse them of attacking law and order and of introducing " the reign of violence ", and to declare that " true " and " ultimate " interests of the workers lay in peaceful co-operation with the employers.[2] In the field of social relations, the disingenuous character of this argument has long been recognised. But just as the threat of class-war by the proletarian is " a natural cynical reaction to the sentimental and dishonest efforts of the privileged classes to obscure the conflict of interest between classes by a constant emphasis on the minimum interests which they have in common ",[3] so the war-mongering of the dissatisfied Powers is the " natural, cynical reaction " to the sentimental and dishonest platitudinising of the satisfied Powers on the common interest in peace. When Herr Hitler refuses to believe " that God has permitted some nations first to acquire a world by force and then to defend this robbery with moralising theories ",[4] we have an authentic echo of the Marxist denial of a community of interest between " haves " and " have-nots ", of the Marxist exposure of the interested character of " *bourgeois* morality ", and of the Marxist demand for the expropriation of the expropriators.

The crisis of September 1938 demonstrated in a striking way the political implications of the assertion of a common

[1] Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs, 1935*, ii. p. 46.

[2] " Pray earnestly that right may triumph ", said the representative of the Philadelphia coal-owners in an early strike organised by the United Mine Workers, " remembering that the Lord God Omnipotent still reigns, and that His reign is one of law and order, and not of violence and crime " (H. F. Pringle, *Theodore Roosevelt*, p. 267).

[3] R. Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, p. 153.

[4] Speech in the Reichstag, January 30, 1939.

interest in peace. When Briand proclaimed that " peace comes before all ", or Mr. Eden that " there is no dispute which cannot be settled by peaceful means ",[1] the assumption underlying these platitudes was that, so long as peace was maintained, no changes distasteful to France or Great Britain could be made in the *status quo*. In the crisis, France and Great Britain were trapped by the slogans which they themselves had used in the past to discredit the dissatisfied Powers, and Germany had become sufficiently dominant (as France and Great Britain had hitherto been) to turn the desire for peace to her own advantage. Since the Munich Agreement, a significant change has occurred in the attitude of the German and Italian dictators. Herr Hitler eagerly depicts Germany as a bulwark of peace menaced by war-mongering democracies. The League of Nations, he declared in his Reichstag speech of April 28, 1938, is a " stirrer up of trouble ", and collective security means " continuous danger of war ". Signor Mussolini in a recent speech at Turin borrowed the British formula about the possibility of settling all international disputes by peaceful means, and declared that " there are not in Europe at present problems so big and so active as to justify a war which from a European conflict would naturally become universal ".[2] It would be a mistake to dismiss such utterances as hypocritical. They are symptoms that Germany and Italy are already looking forward to the time when, as dominant Powers, they will acquire the vested interest in peace recently enjoyed by Great Britain and France, and be able to pillory the democratic countries as enemies of peace. These developments make it easier than it would perhaps have been a few years ago for an Englishman to appreciate Halévy's subtle observation that " propaganda against war is itself a form of war propaganda ".[3]

[1] *League of Nations: Eighteenth Assembly*, p. 63.

[2] *The Times*, May 15, 1939.

[3] Halévy, *A History of the English People in 1895 1905* (Engl. transl.), i. Introduction, p. xi.

The Realist Critique of Internationalism

The concept of internationalism is a special form of the doctrine of the harmony of interests. It yields to the same analysis; and there are the same difficulties about regarding it as an absolute standard independent of the interests and policies of those who promulgate it. "Cosmopolitanism", wrote Sun Yat-sen, "is the same thing as China's theory of world empire two thousand years ago. . . . China once wanted to be sovereign lord of the earth and to stand above every other nation, so she espoused cosmopolitanism."[1] In the Egypt of the Eighteenth Dynasty, according to Dr. Freud, "imperialism was reflected in religion as universality and monotheism".[2] The doctrine of a single world-state, propagated by the Roman Empire and later by the Catholic Church, was the symbol of a claim to universal dominion. Modern internationalism has its genesis in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France, during which French hegemony in Europe was at its height. This was the period which produced Sully's *Grand Dessin* and the Abbé Saint-Pierre's *Projet de Paix Perpétuelle* (both plans to perpetuate an international *status quo* favourable to the French monarchy), which saw the birth of the humanitarian and cosmopolitan doctrines of "the Enlightenment", and which established French as the universal language of educated people. In the next century, the leadership passed to Great Britain, which became the home of internationalism. On the eve of the Great Exhibition of 1851 which, more than any other single event, established Great Britain's title to world supremacy, the Prince Consort spoke movingly of "that great end to which . . . all history points — the realisation of the unity of mankind"; [3] and Tennyson

[1] Sun Yat-sen, *San Min Chu I* (Engl. transl.), pp. 68-9.
[2] Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 36.
[3] T. Martin, *Life of the Prince Consort*, iii. p. 247.

hymned " the parliament of man, the federation of the world ". France chose the moment of her greatest supremacy in post-War Europe to launch a plan of " European Union " ; and Japan at the present time is developing an ambition to proclaim herself the leader of a united Asia. It is symptomatic of the growing international predominance of the United States that widespread popularity should recently have been enjoyed by the book of an American journalist advocating a world union of democracies, in which the United States would play the predominant role.[1]

Just as pleas for " national solidarity " in domestic politics always come from a dominant group which can use this solidarity to strengthen its own control over the nation as a whole, so pleas for international solidarity and world union come from those dominant nations which may hope to exercise control over a unified world. Countries which are struggling to force their way into the dominant group naturally tend to invoke nationalism against the internationalism of the controlling Powers. In the sixteenth century, England opposed her nascent nationalism to the internationalism of the Papacy and the Empire. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Germany has opposed her nascent nationalism to the internationalism first of France, then of Great Britain. This circumstance has made her impervious to those universalist and humanitarian doctrines which were popular in eighteenth-century France and nineteenth-century Britain ; and her hostility to internationalism has been further aggravated since 1919, when Great Britain and France endeavoured to create a new " international order " as a bulwark of their own predominance. " By ' international ',' " wrote a recent German correspondent in *The Times*, " we have come to understand a conception that places other nations at an advantage over our own." [2]

[1] Clarence Streit, *Union Now*

[2] Dr. FitzRandolph, *The Times*, November 5, 1938

Nevertheless, there is little doubt that Germany, if she became supreme in Europe, would adopt international slogans and establish some kind of international organisation to bolster up her power. A British Labour ex-Minister recently advocated the suppression of Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations on the unexpected ground that the totalitarian states might some day capture the League and invoke that article to justify the use of force by themselves.[1] Though it seems unlikely that Germany or Italy would resort to the existing machinery of the League of Nations, the anticipation was, in principle, a shrewd one. There are already signs of the development of the Anti-Comintern Pact into some form of international organisation. " The Anti-Comintern Pact ", said Herr Hitler in the Reichstag on January 30, 1939, " will perhaps one day become the crystallisation point of a group of Powers whose ultimate aim is none other than to eliminate the menace to the peace and culture of the world instigated by a satanic apparition." " Either Europe must achieve solidarity," remarked an Italian journal about the same time " or the ' axis ' will impose it." [2] " Europe in its entirety ", says Dr. Goebbels, " is adopting a new order and a new orientation under the intellectual leadership of National Socialist Germany and Fascist Italy." [3] This is the symptom not of a change of heart, but of the fact that Germany and Italy are now approaching the time when they may become strong enough to espouse internationalism. " International order " and " international solidarity " will always be slogans of those who feel strong enough to impose them on others.

The exposure of the real basis of the professedly abstract principles commonly invoked in international

[1] Lord Marley in the House of Lords, November 30, 1938: *Official Report*, col. 258.

[2] *Relazioni Internazionali*, quoted in *The Times*, December 5, 1938.

[3] *Völkischer Beobachter*, April 1, 1939.

politics is the most damning and most convincing part of the realist indictment of utopianism. The nature of the charge is frequently misunderstood by those who seek to refute it. The charge is not that human beings fail to live up to their principles. It matters little that Wilson, who thought that the right was more precious than peace, and Briand, who thought that peace came even before justice, and Mr. Eden, who believed in collective security, failed themselves, or failed to induce their countrymen, to apply these principles consistently. What matters is that these supposedly absolute and universal principles were not principles at all, but the unconscious reflexions of national policy based on a particular interpretation of national interest at a particular time. There is a sense in which peace and co-operation between nations or classes or individuals is a common and universal end irrespective of conflicting interests and politics. There is a sense in which a common interest exists in the maintenance of order, whether it be international order or "law and order" within the nation. But as soon as the attempt is made to apply these supposedly abstract principles to a concrete political situation, they are revealed as the transparent disguises of selfish vested interests. The bankruptcy of utopianism resides not in its failure to live up to its principles, but in the exposure of its inability to provide any absolute and disinterested standard for the conduct of international affairs. The utopian of to-day, faced by the collapse of standards whose interested character he has failed to penetrate, takes refuge in condemnation of a reality which refuses to conform to these standards. A passage penned by the German historian Meinecke immediately after the War is the best judgment by anticipation of the role of utopianism in the international politics of the post-War period:

> The profound defect of the Western, natural-law type of thought was that, when applied to the real life of

> the state, it remained a dead letter, did not penetrate the consciousness of statesmen, did not hinder the modern hypertrophy of state interest, and so led either to aimless complaints and doctrinaire suppositions or else to inner falsehood and cant.[1]

These " aimless complaints ", these " doctrinaire suppositions ", this " inner falsehood and cant " will be familiar to all those who have studied what has been written about international politics in English-speaking countries during the past few years.

[1] Meinecke, *Staatsrason*, p. 533.