

THE DYNAMICS OF WAR AND REVOLUTION: A Review¹

By E. H. CARR

THE author of this book is that rare phenomenon—an American critic of democracy. He is also those still rather un-American things—a superior person and an intellectual snob. He is a former member of the American diplomatic service; and lest any of his compatriots should suppose that his un-American qualities are due to the corrupting influences of British diplomacy, it is fair to add that he is fervently anti-British, that he believes that Britain's day is done, and that he thinks that the more of us who get killed in the present war the better for our own sake, since it will simplify our post-war problem of supporting our population on our insular resources instead of on our nineteenth century capitalist fat. It should also be said that the American publisher who had accepted and printed the book got cold feet at the last moment, and that Mr. Dennis has had to issue it over his own imprint.

Mr. Dennis argues vigorously against American participation in the war, though he cynically prophesies that the gullible American democracy will be unable to keep itself out. But the book was written before the fall of France, and the argument is conducted on the assumption that American security and American national interests were in no conceivable danger. He takes it everywhere for granted that if the United States chooses to keep out of the way of the "have-nots", they will keep out of hers. But neither this miscalculation nor Mr. Dennis's provocative style should prevent anyone from reading his book. He really has something to say; and while some of it may be misguided and most of it overstated, much of it is stimulating and worth while. His general thesis has affinities with that of Mr. Peter Drucker's *The End of Economic Man*.² One difference is that while Mr. Drucker, an alien resident in the United States, was too tactful to apply his conclusions to that country, Mr. Dennis is mainly concerned to point a moral for his compatriots.

Mr. Dennis begins by equating democracy (using the term in its commonly accepted sense of representative government on the parliamentary model) and capitalism. Democracy is the political aspect of capitalism, as capitalism is the economic aspect of democracy. They rose together, and are now falling together. It is not that democracy and capitalism were wrong in themselves. But they have outlived the conditions which created them and which made them for a century and a half the driving-force of civilization. These conditions were the industrial revolution making possible an enormous accretion of wealth, the expanding frontier, the rapid increase of

¹ THE DYNAMICS OF WAR AND REVOLUTION. By Lawrence Dennis. 1940. (New York: The Weekly Foreign Letter. 8vo. xxxi + 259 pp. \$3.00.)

² THE END OF ECONOMIC MAN. By Peter M. Drucker. 1939. (London: Heinemann. 8vo. xix + 251 pp. 8s. 6d.) Reviewed in *International Affairs* for Nov. 1939, p. 815.

population, the possibility of easy wars of conquest, and the gradual extension of political rights to the masses. All these conditions, except perhaps the first, are finished. Capitalism has become static instead of dynamic, conservative instead of revolutionary. It can no longer provide full employment for men and resources, or make large masses of people richer and richer. "The failure of democracy and capitalism to end unemployment condemns that system as inadequate for human welfare."

The equation of democracy with capitalism might perhaps have been more fully argued, as this will prove a stumbling-block to many who will accept Mr. Dennis's analysis of the bankruptcy of capitalism. Like Mr. Drucker, Mr. Dennis understands that the labour movement in Western Europe and in the English-speaking countries was not and is not anti-capitalist. The fact that its principal concern is to see that labour gets its fair share of the profits of capitalism inevitably makes it an upholder of the capitalist system. "What is wrong with capitalism is not its abuse of the workers or the workers' resentment against the system, but the simple fact that it is running down, to the sorrow of the workers quite as much as of the bosses. . . . The trouble with the industrial revolution is not that it made millionaires, but that it now fails to create enough jobs." It was this fact of a shared interest between workers and bosses in the expanding profits of the system which made nineteenth-century democracy work. "In a phase of economic expansion, the winners are abnormally numerous because of expansion and in spite of competition." This was the basis in reality of the famous doctrine of "the harmony of interests". It is the breakdown of this harmony based on the expansive force of capitalism which threatens democracy. The threat becomes more dangerous when—as is still true of Great Britain and the United States—its character is scarcely anywhere understood.

A symptom of the crisis of democracy is the shift in emphasis away from political rights. "The cry for civil liberties to-day is not heard from the underdogs but from the top-dogs." And again: "In 1940 America, the rich want liberty and the poor want ham and eggs." Many observers have formed the same impression in Great Britain. It is true that the Labour Party still professes a passionate interest in political rights. But the Labour Party represents not the unemployed (that "oppressed minority", as Mr. Dennis calls them), but the professional *élite* of the working class plus the intellectual *élite* of the middle class. The Labour Party has a perfectly clear programme for upholding the rights of the employed worker, but it is as innocent as the Conservative Party itself of any thought-out programme for curing unemployment. Mr. Dennis believes that democracy is incapable of finding a solution, which can be achieved only through a sacrifice of vested rights of both capital and labour. I have not yet been driven to share his pessimism. But I find it hard to disagree with his view that the problem of unemployment is a crucial test which democracy has so far failed to meet.

Where then lies the solution? "The new revolution", writes Mr. Dennis, "is not the discovery of new means, but of new social ends." The Pharaohs built pyramids and the men of the Middle Ages built cathedrals. But the only social end which we recognise as sufficiently important to override, on any large scale, the economic self-interest of the capitalist system—the profit of the employer or the financier and the trade union rules of the worker—is war. Since

war is the one thing for which we are prepared to make really vital sacrifices, war is necessary in order to make the wheels of our social system go round. "America's problem of unemployment could be solved by rebuilding America or going to war with Japan. The war with Japan is more likely. Why? The answer is that our social philosophy recognises the need for national defence but not for social dynamism." The United States, like Europe, will be driven into war by the necessity of finding a cure for unemployment. The thesis, though crudely stated, carries a large measure of conviction. Mr. Dennis, who is concerned with diagnosis rather than with prescription, offers no remedy. He does not believe that democracy, being tied up with capitalism, can make social betterment a sufficiently compulsive social end. I think this is true of our current democracy, which is almost wholly dominated by the producing interests—those of the trade unions as well as of the Federation of British Industries and the National Farmers' Union. Democracy can survive only by ceasing to be a competitive institution, primarily concerned in the distribution of rewards, and by becoming a co-operative institution for producing a more abundant and cheaper output. Put another way, it may be said that the interests of the producer have got to be subordinated to the interests of the consumer—exactly as they are in time of war. If this cannot be done under the existing forms of democracy, those forms will have to be changed. The real need is for more, not for less, democracy.

Mr. Dennis is equally pungent in his criticism of American foreign policy. At the end of the last war, "having enabled the Allies to impose a peace which would have been impossible without the aid of our might, we withdrew our might from the equation". In fact, everybody "wanted a peace of blood and iron enforced by words and paper". He is severe on those Americans who regard the present conflict as one between light and darkness and insist in the next breath on the importance of keeping America out of it. But on these points Mr. Dennis is less original and less stimulating than in his study of the crisis of democracy and capitalism. Here, whatever may be thought of his conclusions, he has the advantage over most writers on current problems of understanding what the real issues are and of having the courage to face them.

E. H. CARR.

WAR AIMS AND PEACE AIMS. III

By HELEN LIDDELL

PROBLEMS of reconstruction are now in everyone's mind, if not yet in the foreground, no longer merely in the background. An increasing number of books on all aspects of the subject and correspondence in the daily and weekly Press make plain the preoccupation with post-war conditions of that section of "the thinking public" which is accustomed to express itself on paper. In addition, conversations overheard in buses and trains show that the man in the street is thinking too, and, like the camel in the adage, coming to certain conclusions. The point of view of the older generation was expressed by a Welsh miner in a recent excellent number of *Picture Post* devoted to Planning. That evacuation, on the one hand, and shelter life, on the other, are