

THE ERA OF TYRANNIES¹

Since its beginnings, in the early years of the nineteenth century, socialism has suffered from an internal contradiction. On the one hand, its partisans often present it as the outcome and fulfillment of the Revolution of 1789, a revolution of liberty, a liberation from the last remaining subjection after all the others have been destroyed: the subjection of labor by capital. But, on the other hand, it is also a reaction against individualism and liberalism; it proposes a new compulsory organization in place of the outworn institutions destroyed by the Revolution:

(a) In its original form, socialism was neither liberal nor democratic, but organizational and hierarchical. Witness Saint-Simonian socialism in particular;

(b) By reaction against socialist anarchy and at the same time by the organizational principle inherent in socialism, the socialist revolution of 1848 ended in the caesarism of 1851 (strongly influenced by Saint-Simonianism);

(c) At the source of German democratic socialism stands Karl Marx, an internationalist, the founder of the International, who looked forward to a final stage of the

¹ [Élie Halévy submitted this communication for discussion by the Société Française de Philosophie on November 28, 1936. The communication, the discussion, and the second appendix, which contains further comments and answers, were first published in the *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie*, 1936, pp. 181-253. The communication and the discussion from the floor, without the appendix, were translated as "The Age of Tyrannies" by May Wallas and published in *Economica*, n.s., VIII, 77-93 (February 1941). They have been retranslated for this volume to maintain stylistic consistency.]

human race that would be anarchy as well as communism. But there was also Ferdinand Lassalle, a nationalist as well as a socialist, and the prime mover of the "social monarchy" of Bismarck.

These remarks seem to us to be strikingly confirmed by the general evolution of European society since the beginning of the Great War and the opening of what we propose to call the era of tyrannies.²

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The era of tyrannies dates from August 1914, that is, from the time when the belligerent nations turned to a system which can be defined as follows:

(a) In the economic sphere, greatly extended state control of all means of production, distribution, and exchange;—and, at the same time, an appeal by the governments to the leaders of workers' organizations to help them in implementing this state control—hence syndicalism and corporatism along with *étatisme*.

(b) In the intellectual sphere, state control of thought, in two forms: one negative, through the suppression of all expressions of opinion deemed unfavorable to the national interest; the other positive, through what we shall call the organization of enthusiasm.

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Postwar socialism derives much more from this wartime regime than from Marxist doctrine. The paradox of postwar socialism is that its recruits often come to it out of hatred and disgust for war, while it offers them a program

² I shall say only a little about the reasons that led me to prefer the word "tyranny" to the word "dictatorship." The Latin word "dictatorship" implies a provisional regime, leaving intact in the long run a regime of liberty which, in spite of everything, is considered normal; while the Greek word "tyranny" implies a normal form of government, which the scientific observer of societies must range alongside other normal forms—monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. One could not, therefore, speak of "an era of dictatorships." It seemed to me, moreover—admit-

consisting in the prolongation of the wartime regime in time of peace. At the outset, Russian Bolshevism displayed these characteristics. Arising out of a revolt against the war, the Russian Revolution was consolidated and organized in the form of "wartime communism" during the two years of fighting with the Allied armies between the Peace of Brest-Litovsk and the final victory of the Communist forces in 1920. Here a new characteristic is added to those we have mentioned above. Because of the anarchical collapse, because of the complete disappearance of the state, a group of armed men, moved by a common faith, decreed that they were the state: in this form Bolshevism is, literally, a "fascism."

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In central Europe, as it happened, "Fascism," a direct imitation of Russian methods of government, was the reaction against socialist "anarchy." But it was led to set up a sort of counter-socialism, under the name of "corporatism," which I am inclined to take more seriously than it is generally taken in anti-fascist circles; it consists in an expanding state control of the economy, with the collaboration of certain working-class elements. The internal contradiction from which European society suffers can, then, be defined as follows. The Conservative parties call for the almost unlimited strengthening of the state with the almost unlimited reduction of its economic functions. The socialist parties call for the unlimited extension of the functions of the state and, at the same time, for the unlimited weakening of its authority. The compromise solution is "national socialism."

What chances are there that these new regimes will

tedly without knowing enough of the history of the ancient world, but I am happy to have received the unreserved support of Marcel Mauss on this point—that the complementary analyses of Plato and Aristotle on the way in which the transition from democracy to tyranny took place in the ancient world have a deep relevance to events of today.

spread further? What possibilities are there of internal decomposition? But, above all, have we given a valid explanation of their origin by pointing to the contradictory nature of socialism itself? These are the questions we submit for consideration by the Société de Philosophie.

Report of the Discussion

*M. Léon Brunschvicg:*³ Gentlemen, today's meeting is a continuation of a discussion that Xavier Léon organized on March 29, 1902. The subject was historical materialism; the principal commentator was Élie Halévy; the speaker was Georges Sorel. Since then many things have happened that have been influenced by the author of *Les illusions du progrès* (*The Illusions of Progress*) and *Reflexions sur la violence* (*Reflections on Violence*).⁴

M. Élie Halévy: If you like, we are resuming the discussion of 1902. But the subject I have submitted for your consideration is very different from that submitted in 1902 for consideration by the Société de Philosophie. Now as then, much will be said of Marx and Marxism, but it will be from a very different angle. Then, as Brunschvicg said, it was a question of historical materialism, that is, of a certain philosophic interpretation of history not necessarily tied to the socialist interpretation of history. Today it is a question of socialism in and of itself (and not exclusively

³ [Léon Brunschvicg, 1869–1944. Professor of the history of modern philosophy at the Sorbonne from 1909. *Spinoza et ses contemporains* (1894); *L'idéalisme contemporain* (1905); *Nature et liberté, la génie de Pascal* (1925). As president of the Société Française de Philosophie, he presided at the meeting.]

⁴ [Xavier Léon, 1868–1935. Co-founder, with Élie Halévy, of the *Revue de métaphysique et morale*. Georges Sorel, 1847–1922, was the major philosopher of syndicalism, the early twentieth-century mutation of Marxism which so deeply affected trade-union organization.] Élie Halévy's remarks, alluded to by M. Brunschvicg, are reprinted in Appendix I.

of Marxist socialism), of its destiny, and of the kind of influence it will have on the future of the human race.

I intend to be brief, to allow as much time as possible for discussion; and, if Brunschvicg will allow me to usurp the functions of the chair, I shall be so bold as to ask you to follow my example, so that the discussion can develop to the fullest. I do not intend to repeat, still less to elaborate on, the printed text, which has been sent to all the members of the Société. In opening the discussion, I shall limit myself to making some personal observations. Not that I attach any special importance to my personality, but to encourage other speakers to follow my example. In comparing our experiences, perhaps some light will be thrown on the great problem that cannot fail to arouse or at least to trouble the consciences of everyone here.

Let me remind you that, at the time of the meeting in March 1902, to which Brunschvicg has referred, I had just begun several months before to lecture on the history of nineteenth-century European socialism at the *École des Sciences Politiques*. Once every two years, since November 1901, I have given that course. I have a certain competence, then, in speaking about socialism, not as a partisan but as an historian. Max Lazard,⁵ who I see is here and who is no longer a very young man, took that course a good thirty years ago. Now, when I agreed to undertake those lectures, what was my intellectual attitude towards socialism? As nearly as I can remember, it was this:

I was not a socialist. I was a "liberal" in the sense that I was an anticlerical, a democrat, and a republican—to use a word then pregnant with meaning, I was a "dreyfusard." But I was not a socialist. Why? It was, I am sure, for a reason of which I have no right to be proud. I was born five or six years too soon. I was a student at the

⁵ [Max Lazard, 1875–1953. Economist and president of the *Association Française pour la Lutte contre le Chômage et l'Organisation du Marché du Travail*, and the author of many works on unemployment.]

École Normale from the autumn of 1889, just after the fall of Boulanger, to the summer of 1892, just before the Panama crisis began. They were years of dead calm. During those three years, I did not know a single socialist at the École Normale. If I had been five years younger, if I had been at the École Normale between, say, 1895 and 1900, if I had been the classmate of Mathiez, Péguy, and Albert Thomas,⁶ it is very likely that at twenty-one I should have been a socialist, free to develop in a direction it is impossible for me to imagine. When we apply the methods of historical research to ourselves and come to discover the reasons for our beliefs, we often find that they are accidental, that they spring from circumstances beyond our control. Perhaps there is a lesson of tolerance in that. If we have learned it well, we have to ask if it is worth while to massacre each other for beliefs whose origins are so flimsy.

I was not a socialist, but I already knew quite a lot about socialism, as much from what I could already observe in France as from what I learned through my experience of things English. At that time I had already made long and frequent visits to England over a period of three or four years; I was already drawn to those two outstanding personalities, Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb. I have remained their friend; and today I feel that we are contemporaries; but then the ten years that separated us meant a great deal. I was a young man of twenty-five or thirty talking with two older people of thirty-five or forty, who had already written books that are classics today. So I listened to them with respect, and they explained to me the principles of their socialism, which was essen-

⁶ [Albert Mathiez, 1874-1932, historian of the French Revolution. Charles Péguy, 1873-1914, poet and writer who was both Catholic and socialist. Albert Thomas, 1878-1932, leader in the Socialist Party, Minister of Munitions during the war, and after the war director of the International Labor Organization.]

tially anti-liberal. They were not fighting Conservatism or Toryism, about which they were quite indulgent, but Gladstonian Liberalism. It was the time of the Boer War; and both the advanced Liberals and the Labourites, who were beginning to organize themselves into a party, defended the Boers against British imperialism, out of generosity and a love of liberty and humanity. But the two Webbs and their friend Bernard Shaw were a group apart. They were ostentatiously imperialistic. The independence of small nations could well mean something to believers in liberal individualism, but not to them, precisely because they were collectivists. I can still hear Sidney Webb explaining to me that the future lay with the great administrative nations, where governing was done by the bureaucrats and order was maintained by the policemen.

It may be their fault if I have always been impressed by what was illiberal in the socialist idea. So there is a second accident in the history of the formation of my mind: remember that if you want to understand how my prejudices came to be what they are. In my course at the *École des Sciences Politiques*, I came to emphasize certain conservative features of nineteenth-century European socialism—authoritarian, monarchical, or Christian socialism; Napoleon III, under the influence of the Saint-Simonians; Bismarck, under the influence of Lassalle. I need not go on: I refer you to the text before you.

About 1910, I admit, I was disturbed by the fact that the Webbs seemed to have been mistaken about England and that their mistake had misled me. A powerful liberal reaction had taken place, which they had not foreseen at all; the new liberalism was strongly tinged with socialism; and the Lloyd George experiment, as they say today, showed that there could be such a thing as a socialistic radicalism, endowed with very great vitality—in short, that reconciliation between socialism and liberalism which the Webbs considered impossible became a reality.

Then the war came. It ushered in what I call the era of

tyrannies. The Webbs and Bernard Shaw have not forsaken their youthful convictions; they find them confirmed by events and divide their sympathies between Russian Bolshevism and Italian Fascism.

I wanted to say this, not to justify my position, but to explain it. To make you understand, I have proceeded, not as a doctrinaire, but as an historian. It is also as an historian—a philosophical historian, if you will, keeping as far as possible above the level of politics (and I hope that you will do the same)—that I have tried to define this “era of tyrannies.” After having read the text of my communication, do you agree, first, that the historical phenomenon with which it deals is a reality? And, second, do you think that my explanation of this phenomenon is plausible? The floor is yours.

M. Max Lazard criticized the speaker for approaching concrete social facts “not directly, but as they are reflected in certain doctrines about them.” Élie Halévy’s reply was as follows:

Max Lazard has made some very interesting observations bearing on the question of method, and it is hard for me to improvise an answer to them. Still, here is what came immediately to mind as I listened to him.

In the first place, I am not inclined to deny, as categorically as he seems to do, the influence of ideas on history and, more directly, on the men who have played important parts in history.

Two examples, which I have given in my communication, and which Max Lazard has referred to, will allow me, I think, to make my meaning clear.

First, let us take the case of Napoleon III. Morny was the real perpetrator of the *coup d’état*, and I grant that, as he saw it, it was inspired only by the political necessities of the time, without any concern with ideas. But he brought about the *coup d’état* for the benefit of the

prince-president, who in 1838 had published a pamphlet called *Idées napoléoniennes* (*Napoleonic Ideas*), which was Saint-Simonian in inspiration. The influence of Bazard and Enfantin on his mind is an historical fact; it is an historical fact that he surrounded himself with councillors who had been Saint-Simonians. He was always obsessed by the notion that he was a Saint-Simonian on the throne.

The case of Bismarck is both similar and different.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of the part played alongside him, from 1862 to 1864, by a man whose role in the history of European socialism is highly ambiguous. I mean Ferdinand Lassalle. At all the prewar social-democratic congresses, two busts presided over the meetings: one of Marx and one of Lassalle. Rightly so. While Marx gave the party its doctrine, Lassalle was the first man in Germany and the first man in Europe to succeed in organizing a party of socialist action. True; but, at the same time, if by a mishap Lassalle had not been born a Jew, he would rightly be acclaimed as a forerunner in the vast halls where National Socialist enthusiasm is stirred up these days.

In those critical years immediately following Bismarck's accession to power, when Lassalle's workers' *Verein* was being organized, what strange language he was speaking! His bitter attacks were not directed against the Bismarckians, but the progressives who were fighting Bismarck. When a burgomaster tried to stop him from speaking, he appealed to the police for help; and when he was prosecuted for his opinions, he made an eloquent appeal to the judges, claiming to be their ally in defending the state against modern barbarism, that is, against liberalism. We know that he was in active correspondence with Bismarck, and that he had secret conversations with him. When Bismarck founded the North German Confederation in 1866 on the basis of universal suffrage, he was directly following advice given to him by Lassalle. When, later, after 1878, he practiced a sort of "state so-

cialism," "Christian socialism," or "monarchical socialism," I am certain that the memory of the lessons Lassalle had taught him were very much in his mind. Not that there was anything doctrinaire about him; he was a purely opportunist statesman, with no concern but to create, strengthen, and maintain the unity of the Empire. He was ready to use every party and every doctrine in turn; one of the doctrines he used was Lassalle's.

These are two cases in which, obviously, ideas are tied up with events, and in which the historian would make a serious mistake if he ignored the history of ideas. Having said that in a general way, I should not be inclined to disagree with anything Max Lazard has said. Far be it from me to reduce history to the history of ideas. Let me explain myself once more by going back to personal recollections. When Max Lazard was my student, many years ago, I was new to teaching; probably the easiest way for me to approach the history of socialism was through the study of ideas; probably the lectures that Max Lazard heard dealt exclusively with ideas. But some thirty years later, Max Lazard's son was studying under me: if he will look at his son's notes, he will see that, as I have learned more, my course has become less and less a course in the history of ideas and more and more a course in straight history. That is not to say that I regret having gone at the history of socialism by way of the history of ideas. As Max Lazard has very wisely put it, ideas stylize and schematize events. Nothing I can think of seems more useful for an understanding of events than such schematization. When we see what success a doctrine like the Marxian doctrine has had, it is because it expresses certain striking features in economic development better than anything else, because it answers certain deep needs of the working masses. How can we deny its utility, insofar as it helps us to understand those striking features and those deep needs?

It is, I think, very easy to translate my ideological lan-

guage into sociological language, without the slightest logical difficulty or the least modification of my thesis. Let us take the first paragraph of my communication and paraphrase it as follows: "Since its beginnings, the working-class movement has suffered from an internal contradiction. On the one hand, we can see it as a movement of liberation, as a rebellion against the factory system, against the subjection of labor by industrial capital. But, on the other hand, to protect themselves against this oppression, the rebellious workers are obliged to seek out a new compulsory organization, in place of the outworn institutions that revolutionary liberalism has destroyed." So Max Lazard is completely satisfied, and my thesis remains intact.

Besides, does not a major point in my communication—indeed, Max Lazard has admitted it—call attention to the important part played in the recent history of the civilized world by an historical event that has nothing to do with doctrines: I mean the Great War of 1914? On rereading what I have written, I regret that I have not sufficiently emphasized the link between the social consequences of this great event and the earlier evolution of socialism. To explain myself more clearly, allow me to join up the first two sections of my communication. Here is what I should say if I were rewriting it now.

In the economic sphere, I should say, the prewar socialists demanded state control of all means of production, distribution and exchange. In very large measure, this state control was brought about by the war, for reasons that the socialists had certainly not foreseen. If one goes back for a quarter century or so before the war, the socialist program—if you wish, the Guesdist program—called for nationalization pure and simple, the state control of the main industries, starting with the railways, as if that were enough to solve the social question. But in 1914 the syndicalist movement had already been in existence for a number of years; it distrusted the state too much to accept

this solution. It called for the general syndicalization of industry without any intervention by the state, and the absorption of all bureaucracy by syndicalist organization—in other words, the radical elimination of the state. The English, however—moderate even in their utopias—worked out a mixed doctrine, looking towards a kind of compromise between the radical syndicalism of the French, Italians, and Spaniards, and a kind of *étatisme*. What were the legitimate functions of the democratic state? What were those of the syndicalist corporations? Such were the questions the Guild Socialists discussed among themselves. When the war had scarcely begun, and because of the war, we see (I am now citing my original text) an “appeal by the governments to the leaders of workers’ organizations to help them in implementing this state control—hence syndicalism and corporatism along with *étatisme*.” Once the war was over, in all the belligerent countries, we see large numbers of people—who, outside England, probably had never heard of Guild Socialism—working out schemes of “nationalized industry,” which, profiting from the experience of wartime socialism, seemed in many ways to be applications of the program of the Guild Socialists.

I turn now to another point that Max Lazard raised at the end. It concerns the prospects for the survival of the tyrannical regimes of today. The last lines of my communication are all that remain of a whole paragraph I had devoted to this question. I eliminated the paragraph on the advice of our chairman, who gave me two different and contradictory reasons for doing so. The first was that I had to keep something in reserve to say in the discussion. The other was that, if the discussion got onto that subject, it could degenerate into a political debate. I gave in to this second reason. I am quite willing, however, to say a few words to answer Max Lazard’s observations on this point, to say that I agree with him.

From the standpoint of those who love peace and lib-

erty, I should be almost more pessimistic than he is. The idea of a European federation does not seem to have much life at present, and Max Lazard seems for a moment to have surrendered to a confused hope in an imperialism that, by taking in all of Europe, would bring peace, though it could not bring freedom. That seems to me completely chimerical today. I can think of only one tyranny that could provide this spirit of universality and on which Max Lazard could depend (does he depend on it?) to give Europe such a peace. But the tyrannies closer to us—the tyranny of Berlin and the tyranny of Rome—are narrowly nationalist. They can offer us nothing but war. If it comes, the situation of the democracies will be tragic. If they want to wage war effectively, can they remain parliamentary and liberal democracies? It is my view, which I shall not make you listen to again, that they cannot. When the war begins again, it will consolidate the “tyrannical” idea in Europe.

Speaking of the failure of 1848, M. Célestin Bouglé⁷ attributed it less than the speaker to socialist anarchy and the terror it inspired, pointing to the democratic socialism of Louis Blanc as the first effort to guarantee the progress of political and intellectual liberalism, though at the sacrifice of economic liberalism.

M. Élie Halévy: We should need not an afternoon, or the end of an afternoon, but, as they say at Pontigny,⁸ we should need ten days to give this subject the attention it deserves. But I am going to try to answer the various points raised by Bouglé as briefly as I can.

He criticizes me for using the words “reaction against

⁷ [On Bouglé, see above, p. xxvii.]

⁸ [At Pontigny, in a Cistercian abbey disused after the dissolution of the religious orders in 1901, Paul Desjardins, in the years following 1910, organized discussions to promote international intellectual co-operation.]

socialist anarchy" in describing the *coup d'état* of December [1851]. He is right; my wording has not, perhaps, done justice to what I wanted to say. I should have written "reaction against the fear of anarchy." But, psychologically, doesn't that come to the same thing?

It is a curious fact. Things developed in much the same way in Italy before the march on Rome. In 1920, the year of the occupation of the factories, there was anarchy. It was then that Giolitti armed Mussolini and his Fascists to serve as police, because the army could not be depended on. But when Mussolini seized power, and thanks in part to him, there had been no disorder for two years. What carried him forward was the memory of the fear felt in 1920 and people's persistent feeling that they had been saved from the inability of the parties of order to maintain that order by parliamentary methods.

This helps us to understand better what happened in 1851. At that time there was no more anarchy, except in parliament: in the Legislative Assembly, the reactionary majority could not agree on the form of government to oppose to the Mountain, which was both noisy and frightening to those who remembered 1848 and 1793. The masses threw themselves into the arms of a man who stood for order, without also standing for reaction, as the legitimists and Orleanists in the Assembly were accused of doing. We should not forget that, on the very day when he abrogated the Constitution of 1848, he re-established universal suffrage, which had been badly mutilated by the Assembly. Nor should we forget that when Guizot heard the news of the *coup d'état*, he burst out: "It is the triumph of socialism." The phrase is comic in a way; still it was an accurate enough expression of the feelings of the bourgeoisie faced with a regime not of their own making and pursuing ends other than theirs.

As for my definition of Bolshevism as a "fascism," I agree with what Bouglé has said. But on this point, I do not believe that my wording has failed to do justice to my

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thoughts. I wrote: "Because of the anarchical collapse . . . of the state, a group of armed men, moved by a common faith, decreed that they were the state: *in this form*, Bolshevism is, *literally*, a fascism." I say expressly that it is only a matter of the form of government. Bolshevism, with its dictatorship, or tyranny, of the Communist Party, was the originator here. But, although Italian Fascism is only an imitation, I think that the word "fascism" is better for describing the common characteristics of the two regimes. It is an old Italian word meaning groups, armed groups of partisans. In Italy after 1870, at the time of the First International, there were *fasci operai*, inspired by the anarchist ideals of Bakunin: they became established in Spain, where we see them in action today. Mussolini seized power by using other *fasci*—the *fasci di combattimento*—in the service of a different ideal.

As to the possibility of a democratic socialism—authoritarian in the economic sphere and liberal in the political and intellectual spheres—I should not want to deny that, theoretically, such a thing is possible. I am only afraid that in using Louis Blanc to support his thesis, Bouglé has found the best way to weaken it.

He must remember (he knows Proudhon better than I do) the violent, concerted attack made after 1848 by Proudhon (who called himself a socialist, but was he?) and Michelet (a republican without being a socialist) against Louis Blanc's socialism. They denounced Louis Blanc for glorifying the Terror, the Committee of Public Safety, and Robespierre, a disciple of Rousseau and an incorruptible, whom he opposed to those immoral republicans who, on the basis of Voltairean liberalism, were leading France to domination by the clergy and to caesarism. Did the event prove them wrong?

Can I ignore the fact that the origins of democracy are ambiguous, since they go back to the Jacobins, and the Jacobins ruled by dictatorship? The Marxist doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat comes, does it not, in a

straight line from Babeuf, the last survivor of Robespierri-ism? Was not Karl Marx, in Paris before 1848, very definitely influenced by Blanqui, who revived the theory of Babeuf?

You object. I am reminded of the Marxist formula—really devised by Engels, not Marx—according to which the goal is to substitute the administration of things for the government of persons. That is a transformation of an old Saint-Simonian formula, according to which, when the industrial regime succeeds the military regime, there will no longer be government but only administration. Fair enough; but the doctrine of Karl Marx is also the doctrine of Lenin. I have before me a letter from M. Salzi,⁹ in which he criticizes me for having spoken of Karl Marx as “looking forward to a stage of the human race that will be anarchy along with communism.” “Nothing could be further from the truth,” he writes, “the Marxist system demands a rigorous and total discipline. I see nothing in it that implies any anarchy whatsoever. Look at the Russians, who have applied it with a vengeance.” And he sends me to André Gide.

Alas! There lies the tragedy. I am sure that nothing could be truer than my statement. Every socialist government coming to power is forced to use complicated scholastics to explain how it must act when, professing a doctrine of complete socialism, it takes over in a non-socialist society. Here the Marxist formulas come in. By definition, every state is an instrument of oppression of one class by another. From the advent of capitalism down to the present, the state has been the instrument the bourgeoisie has used to oppress the proletariat. To prepare for and hasten the coming of a society without classes and so without government, we must go through an intermediary period in which the state will be the instrument used by the working class to oppress the bourgeoisie,

⁹ [Pierre Salzi, 1889—. From 1935 to 1947 he taught philosophy at the Lycée Janson-de-Sailly, Paris.]

until the bourgeoisie can be eliminated. Is it a mere suspension of legality? The phrase can have many meanings: Karl Marx certainly did not foresee anything so relentless as the Soviet system; and if it were only a question of full powers given to the government for six months, as they were given to Poincaré in finance, it would be a quite harmless suspension. But if the suspension must last for several decades—why not a century or two?—I cease being interested in the state of anarchy that they tell us will succeed it. What interests me is the present and the near future; beyond that lies what Jules Romains calls the ultra-future. Do not the Nazi fanatics too believe that their regime has an ultimate value, that it is the opening of a new era that will last forever?

Several members spoke, particularly M. Berthelot¹⁰ and M. Maublanc, who objected to the accusation of tyranny made against Marxism and to the assimilation of Soviet dictatorship to the Fascist and Hitlerite dictatorships. Élie Halévy answered as follows:

I must now bring the discussion to a close. I am very sorry to do so, because I find myself in an impossible situation. To satisfy everyone, I should have to discuss the whole of Marxist doctrine in reply to Maublanc, and the whole history of the human race since Tamburlaine to answer René Berthelot. I should have to go outside Europe and say something about the New Deal; in fact, I am sorry that more has not been said about the experiments that Roosevelt has tried, experiments that in some ways resemble Italian or Fascist corporatism, without suppressing freedom.

¹⁰ [René Berthelot, 1872–1960, professor of philosophy at the University of Brussels. *Évolutionnisme et platonisme* (1907); *Un romantisme utilitaire* (1911–1922). He was Élie Halévy's cousin and had been with him at the École Normale.]

In answering Drouin,¹¹ should I bring up the question of predictions? In fact, just now, Max Lazard and I did not evade it. We were in complete disagreement, by the way, with René Berthelot: we saw our only encouragement to hope in a long period of peace, in which the dictatorships would grow less stringent because tyrannical governments cannot continually keep their populations on a war footing without going to war. But are these tyrannical regimes themselves conducive to the maintenance of peace? And if war begins again, and if the democracies are forced to adopt totalitarian methods to save themselves from destruction, will there not be a generalization of tyranny, a strengthening and spreading of this form of government?

I might add that some of you have thought you were criticizing me when the criticism bore only on some possibly imperfect form of expression. I am thinking now of Maublanc and his apology for Marxism. He criticizes me for having presented Marxism "as a liberation from the last remaining subjection, after all the others have been destroyed, the subjection of labor by capital." But when he says that that liberation is "the true liberation, without which all the others are only illusions," his assertion comes very close to mine. After this liberation is brought about, Marx assures us that we shall enter finally (and it is in that sense only that I have spoken of a "final stage" of the human race) into a classless society. In that classless society, the evolution of mankind will certainly continue (I grant that to Maublanc), but it will be according to forms (if Maublanc will grant this to me) that we cannot foresee, since it will no longer be possible to say, as has been true until now, that "the history of the human race is the history of the class struggle."

Rather than dwell on such disagreements, I am trying to find a fundamental point common to several of my

¹¹ [Marcel Drouin, 1870-1943. He pursued a literary career under the pseudonym of Michel Arnauld.]

critics that would usefully serve as the theme for my concluding remarks. I think I have found it. Is it not the question of whether the Russian tyranny and the Italian and German tyrannies ought to be seen as essentially identical phenomena or as essentially antithetical?

Far be it from me to deny that, in many respects which anyone can see, they are antithetical. I have been to Leningrad, and I know Fascist Italy. When one crosses the Russian frontier, one feels at once that one is entering another world; such an overturning of all values may be thought of, if one wants, as justifying an extreme tyranny. But there is nothing like that in Italy; and the traveler comes to ask if such a huge police apparatus is needed, if the only results are that the roads are better kept up and that the trains are more likely to run on time.

Nevertheless (and everyone seems to have conceded this point), the forms of the systems are identical. A country is governed by an armed sect, imposing itself in the presumed interest of the whole country, which can do so because it is moved by a common faith. But there is something more.

The Russian Communists invoke a system of belief that is valid for the whole human race, and that implies the elimination of nations as well as of classes. But, having seized power in one country only, and becoming more and more resigned to not bringing about the world revolution by propaganda and example, they are forced, by the necessities of their own existence, to set up a military barrier against the threat of foreign armies. By force of circumstances, they are thrown back on a kind of patriotism at once territorial and ideological; and their tyranny, for anyone who looks at it from the ideological point of view, ends up looking very like the German or Italian tyranny. At first, the state was said to be only temporary; it was to be endured because its only purpose was to prepare the way for the abolition of the state and to assure the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Little by little, they

began to practice a heroic morality, the nobility of which I quite appreciate: the individual is asked to learn to suffer to do great things in the service of the state. This state of mind bears little resemblance to a hedonism relegated to the distant future. I can only call it warlike.

On the fascist side, in the current sense of the word, in Italy and in Germany, there is no question at all of eliminating classes. The very program of the parties in power is the defense of a society based on class distinctions. But I believe I am right in saying that in these two countries, there has grown up "a sort of counter-socialism, under the name of 'corporatism,' which I am inclined to take more seriously than it is generally taken in anti-fascist circles."

We are told that wages in these countries are very low, lower than in many democratic countries. I am inclined to admit the truth of that. But, in evaluating the total wages of the worker, should we not reckon with the income that he draws indirectly from all the benefits included in what is called *Dopolavoro*—free railway travel, rest homes, and many kinds of recreation? I know that all these benefits are motivated by an ulterior political purpose: the workers' leisure is to be kept occupied to distract them from the possible influence of revolutionary agitators—following my earlier formulation, it is a matter of directing and "organizing their enthusiasm." But in the end all that means a rise in wages, which costs the state money.

And once it costs the state money, I turn around and ask, "Where will the state find the money?" Taking up a formula that some ten years ago scandalized the conservative press, I answer: it can be found and taken only from those who have it. A heavy fiscal burden rests on the wealthy classes; I do not deny that big business benefits from these regimes. But it is not the old capitalism, the free capitalism of Manchester. The captains of industry still prefer such a regime to communism. They are still in charge. But they are no longer the masters, they are highly

placed bureaucrats. And the large incomes they draw every year resemble salaries, not profits.

In short, on the one hand, a complete socialism is moving towards a kind of nationalism. On the other hand, an integral nationalism is moving towards a kind of socialism. That is all that I wanted to say.