ENGLAND TODAY

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A few weeks ago the glamorous Miss Loretta Young of movie fame returned to her native land after a few weeks' visit to this country, and immediately proceeded to give her impressions of England. She told (inter alia) of the poor business man who wore cardboard soles on his shoes because he could not obtain leather; of the shipping clerk who had grown a beard because no razor blades were available; of the factory employees who without fail faint at eleven each morning through lack of calories.

I think I must be missing a great deal here because I have seen none of these. I can only attribute her misrepresentation of living conditions in this country to a natural Hollywoodian love of sensationalism —a sensationalism which might achieve the desired end of getting this publicity-wise star's name in the world's headlines, with its consequent effect on her box-office appeal.

But I'm afraid that the glamorous Miss Young in her short visit missed a great deal that I have seen here. I cannot help but feel how more apt it would be for that lady to have seen those things to which I feel a duty to refer. How greater a service to the freedom-loving peoples of the world could the publicity given her impressions have rendered! How sad a thing it is that the duty of referring to these naked truths should fall on persons like myself, whose ideas—inadequately expressed at the best—can reach only a comparative few!

And what is this thing which I have seen but which Miss Young has missed? I will state it as a blunt, naked fact: England, this great nation which for years has shown the way to the democratic and freedom-loving people of the world, is fast on its way to becoming a totalitarian state. Sensationalism—even surpassing Miss Young's—you may think. But I give it to you as a truthful expression of the saddest conviction I hold today.

My only misgiving is that I am attributing this condition to England. But it is not peculiar to this country alone. The same signs and portents of danger are becoming increasingly obvious in all the nations of Western Europe and—to a more or less degree—in many another of the still-democratic nations of the rest of the world.

But it is here in this island that the crisis between the forces of good and evil will occur. And if this country goes under, if it succumbs to the forces of totalitarianism, what will happen to our cherished Canadian and American ways of life? The answer is too obvious. We, too, in the New World will be dragged to the depths of the bottomless pit.

I hasten here to correct an impression which my words above may have created. I am not saying that England IS a totalitarian state; I am not saying that she WILL succumb. Far from it. I am merely saying that the evil forces of Communism—and many of them in disguised form—are at work in this island on an unprecedented scale. They are gaining in vigour and in effect. The crisis is not far ahead, and it will be a real crisis. Let us not fool ourselves in believing that international war can be avoided.

I can have no patience with those people who claim today that Communist Russia is on the defensive, that she is "afraid" of the democratic Western world, and is merely establishing a protective perimeter.

That is a complete and utter illusion. This suggestion has been advanced when she took over each of the Balkan States in turn; when she displayed such reticence in co-operating with the Western powers in solving the problem of Germany; each time she uses the veto in UNO sessions; when the Coninform was revived; and now again when she has imposed her monstrous will on the peoples of Czechoslovakia. Surely we cannot leave our heads buried in the sands for a second time in one all-too-short decade. Let us recognize that Russia is out to dominate the whole world. Her objective is nothing less.

Even the pattern of her planned aggression is obvious. Finland is already being "requested" to toe the line. Next in order will come Italy and France. I give them three years at the most. There are those who claim that the strength and influence of the Vatican in Italy and the traditional love of freedom in France will be sufficient to put paid to any Communist attempts in those countries. The near-success of the preparatory test-manoeuvres of the Communists in both those unstable countries within the past year is only too demonstrative of their inability to hold their aggressor at bay for much longer. The fall in these countries will not be without blood-letting. But it will not amount to war. The aggression will be of the latent, "democratic" type—as in Czechoslovakia. A continuous weakening of the government's position, infiltration into important governmental, industrial and trade union posts, conversion of the more moderate Socialists into complacent, if not extreme, revolutionaries, the promotion of dissatisfaction among all groups of the people, followed by a sudden coup d'etat to "save the nation" from "plotting right-wing reactionaries"; that will be the pattern which will win the day. Mixture the same as before!

Britain, not sufficiently recovered from her deep wounds incurred in the last conflict and with her attention diverted by the process of "socialization" at home, will be in no position to interfere. The Americans, in despair, will give Europe up as a lost cause and withdraw into a thin isolationist shell.

Then will commence a period of consolidation of the newly-acquired converts to the great gospel of Communism. We know only too well what tools and methods the Nazis employed in their consolidation efforts. What reason is there to believe that the Communists will content themselves with using less effective means than the concentration camp and the gas chamber?

With all continental Europe and—by then—a greater part of Asia under their influence, and with their appetite for world power wellwhetted, where then will the Communists, under the guiding hand of Moscow, direct their efforts? I suggest that it will be toward Britain, and that the critical attempt will come in ten to twelve years. Of the direction of the attack I have no doubt. My estimate of the period of preparation required may be a few years out. It may take longer; but it may indeed take far less time than the period I suggest. My figure is based entirely on my present observations of the speed at which initial progress has been made here.

The sad part of the tale is, of course, that not all the preparatory measures can be attributed directly to Moscow, nor even to the self-confessed Communists in this country. As much our enemies (though I hesitate to call them such) are those whose righteous, sincere and unwitting efforts are leading themselves, and indeed all of us, into the Communist camp. And I think this brings me inevitably to some consideration of this utopian scheme—Socialism.

To me the essential questions seem to be there: Can Socialism be democratic? Does it permit of the democratic rights and freedoms which we cherish? Can Socialists, even though well-meaning they be, prevent themselves, in their intense hatred of the "right" and with their natural feeling of affinity to all whose aims are derived from the teachings of Marx, from being dragged and driven further and further toward the left, until even the methods they employ are indistinguishable from those practised by the Russians today? (I need hardly point out that the word "democratic" can convey two quite different meanings, dependent, of course, on the political faith of the person using it; I am using it as the majority of Canadians still understand it).

Any philosophical consideration of the reasoning behind my answers to the above questions would be quite outside the scope of this letter. In this respect I must content myself with directing your attention to such a book as Hayek's "The Road To Serfdom." Read it and understand it! I can here, though, give a brief factual account of acts and tendencies in this country which support my conviction that the answers to these questions must incontrovertibly be negative. I would list the following among Socialist "achievements" here:—

1. They are succeeding in stirring up class strife and dissension to a degree almost incomprehensible to one who has not witnessed their efforts at first hand. Their every effort is directed to setting off the "reactionaries" against the "progressives." They ridicule and abuse those who by their own definition (and it appears to me to be virtually identical to the Communist one) fall under the former description, and praise and sustain those who rejoice in being included under the latter. It would require pages to enumerate the various instances which support my premise. Mr. Shinwell's statement that he does not "give a tinker's damn for the middle classes," and the Minister of Education's reference to the children of Tory supporters as "Tory brats" are excellent, and typical, examples.

2. The Socialist government has become just as subservient to a particular group with selfish and ambitious aims as the most extreme exponents of the "right" have ever been to the capitalist elements of society. I refer, of course, to their subservience to the magnates of trade unionism. Let not this observation be taken as a condemnation of the trade union movement, of that sincere collective effort by industrial employees to gain recognition of their claims to a representative position in society. But no intelligent, thinking person in this country can deny that the trade union movement has been to a most alarming degree taken over by a small group of political intellectuals who dictate its every move. The control exercised by avowed Communists over the trade unions of this country is to my mind one of the greatest single instances I can cite in support of the premise I have given above. Already the Electrical Trades Union has been almost completely captured, and penetration into the Mine-Workers Union, the Transport and General Workers Union, the General and Municipal Workers Union and the Amalgamated Engineering Workers Union has been most deep. Of all the large unions only that of the agricultural workers has been spared. And it is the trade union movement which is dictating in large measure the financial policy of the government today. To consider one aspect of that policy—no impartial economist in this country today would deny that the policy of food subsidization, which eats up some £400 million annually (at this year's rate), is one of the things greatly conducing to inflation. It re-

quires examination and revision. But dare the government face the consequence of that at the polls? Another example—the recently extended price control policy is the price paid by the government—against its better judgment—for the acceptance by the trade unions of its recent request to go lightly on wage increase demands. At the time of writing it looks rather as though the consideration in this bargain has moved mostly from the one side.

3. Great inroads have been made upon the sovereignty of Parliament. The greatest has undoubtedly been the refusal of Ministers to give information on the floor of the House in respect to the recently established great public corporations governing air and rail transport, gas and electricity, and coal. Another instance has been the promotion and passing of the bill to cut the veto power of the House of Lords from two years to one. However much some reform of the House of Lords is desirable, the government's action can almost wholly be attributed to its desire to secure for itself the power to get the proposed steel nationalization bill on the statute books before the next general election. Again—the accepted—almost constitutional—procedure for reform of Parliament itself prescribes a Speaker's all-party conference preliminary to the recommendation of changes to the House. Here, too, the constitution has been bent and twisted to suit the will of the masters. The government has prepared on its own a bill for electoral reform—a bill highly favourable to itself.

4. The Socialist party has instilled in its followers a fanaticism most reminiscent of that of other utopian dreamers we have known in the past decade. The "party" is omnipotent. It preaches a revolutionary doctrine far greater and more all-embracing than any known religion! Its representatives on the floors of the House have even sung together "The Red Flag." The term "comrade" is becoming most popular in the party. Red ties are everywhere.

5. The number of crypto-Communist fellow travellers in the party is notorious. A conservative estimate of those actual M.P.'s in this class is approximately 30. More liberal estimates have run as high as 100 (and probably not without justification). One, at least, in the present cabinet is a former Communist. Both parties aspire to the same aim—a "classless society" with all production controlled by the State. The Communist declares that open revolution, violent, if necessary, must be the medium of the process; the Socialist claims the revolution can be brought about by democratic and constitutional means. The only test of the individual can be this: Whether he is a democrat first and a socialist second, or vice versa. It is hardly a practical one, because the man who is socialist first, merely by virtue of being such, is not going to admit it, particularly if its non-revelation furthers the aims of his faith. Many of the social-democrat parties in Europe, although terming themselves "socialists," have collaborated with the Communists in a degree which makes them hardly distinguishable. But the Labour party here, given as it is to the practice of regarding as an ally anyone who calls himself "socialist," has to date shown a marked reticence in acknowledging this fact. Witness the fact that the collaborating Nenni socialists of Italy have been invited to represent that country at a European socialist-party conference in London in preference to the smaller group of sincere socialists who have broken away. (It is particularly interesting that the conference is meeting to consider the Marshall Plan; I wonder how warm will be the co-operation of the Nenni socialists). To cite one more instance—socialist students in this country are flocking to a conference of European social democrat students to be held in Germany during the Easter

vacation. Three New Brunswick students, included in the group, have already received their conference instructions.....addressed "Dear Comrade"! And this is the revolutionary—not the fraternal—usage of the term. I have only today heard one of these chaps attempt to justify the collaboration of European socialists with communists. Surely we are intelligent enough to realize that with Communist principles there can be no sane compromise.

6. They are building up a terrific State machine to which every individual within its jurisdiction and power must be subservient. The State is no longer the servant of the individual; it is becoming more and more each day the master. What are termed "private monopolies" are being turned into all-powerful State monopolies. They would have us believe that in nationalization lies the solution to every difficulty, real and imaginary.

7. They have resorted to a measure hitherto unknown to any free and democratic society in time of peace—the compulsory State direction of labour.

8. Through the establishment of departmental tribunal and the placing of arbitrary judicial authority in the persons of various Ministers and lesser governmental officials, the government has to a most alarming degree diminished the jurisdiction of the courts, thus striking at the very roots of what we have prided ourselves in terming "British justice."

This list is not exhaustive. I could go on at length and tell of how the multiplicity of petty controls and regulations—each one leading to myriads more—has bred in every inhabitant of this island an ever-growing and natural disrespect for the law and for constituted authority; of how information concerning food and other contracts is being withheld from the people and even from their elected representatives in Parliament; of how the civil service has grown from a force of one-quarter million to a terrific muddling bureaucracy of three-quarters of a million; of how the attention of the police is being diverted from the ever-increasing major crimes to the numerous—and too often innocent—infringements of unnecessary legislative and executive restrictions; of how private enterprise is being stifled beneath the overburdening piles of official forms and returns. But I am sure the foregoing must give some indication of why I believe that this country is being led over the steps which all wayward states initially traverse.

Why do I say the crisis will occur in Britain? I could give various reasons, but first and foremost among these is the fact that these Britons are a comparatively mature race politically. They have known freedom. They have held the moral leadership of the world. They have experienced at first hand the ravages of totalitarian despots. They will be the first peoples to recognize the follies into which they are being led. Not all of them will recognize these follies, nor will all of them want to recognize them. But the majority of enlightened individuals who do will be sufficiently great that a determined and successful stand will be taken against these evil forces of collectivism so akin to the national socialist doctrines of the Nazis and those of the Italian fascists. The peoples of North America will rise in unison to join in this newest and greatest crusade. I think I could forecast with some degree of accuracy its pattern, but it might perhaps be ill-advised at this time to succumb to the temptation of describing it on paper.

I might say a word about possible courses in Britain. She has two immediate alternatives: To retain in power her present socialist government; or, to throw out these super-planners and put at the helm a Tory government. Regardless of which alternative she chooses, I feel that the impending crisis is not to be avoided. But her choice can affect in no small degree her ability to emerge from it victorious.

Adoption of the first can lead only to a very considerable weakening of her powers of resistance. But I think it is the second alternative which she will choose. A month ago I would have estimated there was only an even chance of that. But every day the blundering socialists have remained in power the folly of their ways has become the more apparent. And thus it will continue. The result of the recent by-election in a south London suburb has been most clear evidence of that.

The question naturally follows: What can we in Canada do to combat this menace? I would list the following as essentials:—

1. Let us reject these utopian ideologies which can make no allowance for the human factor. Leave them to the intellectual dreamers.

2. Let us continuously strive, by moderate, constitutional and democratic means, to better our present system.

3. Let us reassert our faith in Christian teachings and beliefs. And let us also practice them.

4. As we watch from the wings, the acts on the European stage, let us never say "it can't happen here." There can be no self-righteous isolation in the society of today.

These are some of my impressions.

EDITOR'S NOTE:- This article was received as a letter to the Alumni Editor—Mr. Dickson is a Beaverbrook Overseas Scholar appointed for 1947 from the Law School.