

TWO CONTEMPORARIES — Marx and Disraeli

By MISS MARGARET ROBERTS

ABOUT THE middle of the last century there lived two politicians whose philosophies were to have a profound influence on the future of national and world politics. They were Marx and Disraeli. Contemporaries, they based their conclusions on the same set of circumstances.

Conditions in the mid-nineteenth century were bad, largely because the Industrial Revolution went forward at such a pace that social conscience and remedial legislation could not keep up with tremendous new problems that came to light. The population was growing rapidly and tending to concentrate in towns, raising urgent problems of health, sanitation and crowding, in home and factory.

Disraeli and Marx viewing this scene, both saw two nations—the "rich" and the "poor," but the remedies which the two men proposed to meet the situation were utterly different.

According to Marx's argument the "haves," i.e. the capitalists, were so greedy that they would never pay the "have nots," i.e. the proletariat, more than a starvation wage. Consequently, when the total productivity of the country increased, the capitalist would take all the extra profits leaving the proletariat with the same wages, and the gap between the two classes would widen. Such a system would inevitably break down, the proletariat would revolt against his master and would seize absolute power.

This was the crux of the Marxist theory. To apply it to Britain would have showed no appreciation of the potentialities of the British people. But it must be remembered that Karl Marx was a German who had been expelled from his native land and who wrote his political thesis in the dusty air of the British Museum. He had nothing in common with our way of life and he neither did nor could appreciate it.

Contrast Disraeli's approach to the problem. First and foremost he knew the way of life of the English people. He understood the meaning of the problems of the Industrial Revolution. He saw the poverty and misery which surrounded many homes. All this he perceived . . . but beyond it he envisaged One Nation.

He saw that the gulf which separated rich and poor could be bridged and that eventually the gulf would close and a healthy and strong nation emerge. The secret of Disraeli's bridge lay not in class struggle and revolution, but in methods which we should now describe as characteristically British. Namely: (i) Social Reform to improve the lot of the poor and helpless, and to help people to help themselves; (ii) The right of the workers to combine for collective bargaining to improve their wages and their welfare; (iii) Opportunity for those with ability to create for themselves, and so to benefit from exercising their own genius.

Disraeli's creed was not all material as was that of Marx. He knew that as well as looking after the material interests of the people, it was necessary to touch their emotions by appealing to the greatness of the country and the splendour of her Imperial Traditions. He knew that above all politics and all governments there stood the moral law of Christianity that demanded spiritual as well as material values. He appreciated that man cannot live without bread, but he cannot live by bread alone. Therein lay perhaps the greatest difference between Disraeli's creed and the Marxist philosophy.

In 1867 Marx published his theory in a book called *Das Kapital*. Seven years later Disraeli was returned to power with a clear Conservative majority. During his period of office he carried out a great programme of social reform, thereby raising the standard of living of our people and averting the Marxist remedy. The years have proved Disraeli right. Conditions have improved as he said they would and modern industry has produced a variegated society with every sort of gradation from the highest to the lowest, with the majority of people being somewhere in the middle. A person's position does not depend on his wealth or his birth, but on his ability. Industries are now owned by millions of small capitalists and the persons who Marx referred to as the proletariat often own property and shares. Disraeli's vision of National Unity has outmoded the class struggle of Marx.

But there are some, who for their own selfish purposes try to whip up

class hatred, even today in the 20th century. The outcome of that can only be the Totalitarian Communism that is practised in Russia. The answer does not lie in the milder form that we are witnessing in this country. It lies in Disraeli's vision re-interpreted in the modern Conservative creed of ONE FREE NATION.

AN ODD FEW MINUTES TO FILL IN THE CLUB? THEN TRY THE PEOPLE AND PLACES QUIZ

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(Answers on Page 7, col. III)

In this quiz take the first letter of each answer and these will form the name of a well-known Kent M.P. (Conservative). Then name his constituency.

1. President of the Board of Trade.
2. Minister of Transport.
3. Conservative M.P. for Aberdeen, noted for his forthright views.
4. This constituency is represented in Parliament by Mr. Quintin Hogg.
6. Mr. Attlee's present constituency.
8. This Kent constituency has the youngest woman Conservative candidate.
7. Lord Beaverbrook's son — Conservative M.P. for Holborn.
8. Former Socialist M.P. who resigned through nationalisation proposals for iron and steel.
9. Speaker of the House of Commons.
10. Suggested as a "Satellite town" in Kent.
11. Socialist M.P. for Reading—author and a leading advocate of more State control.
12. This Socialist peer is a well-known member of the Magic Circle.
13. Chairman of London Transport.
14. Youngest Conservative M.P.
15. Conservative M.P. for Flint —noted for his speeches and articles.